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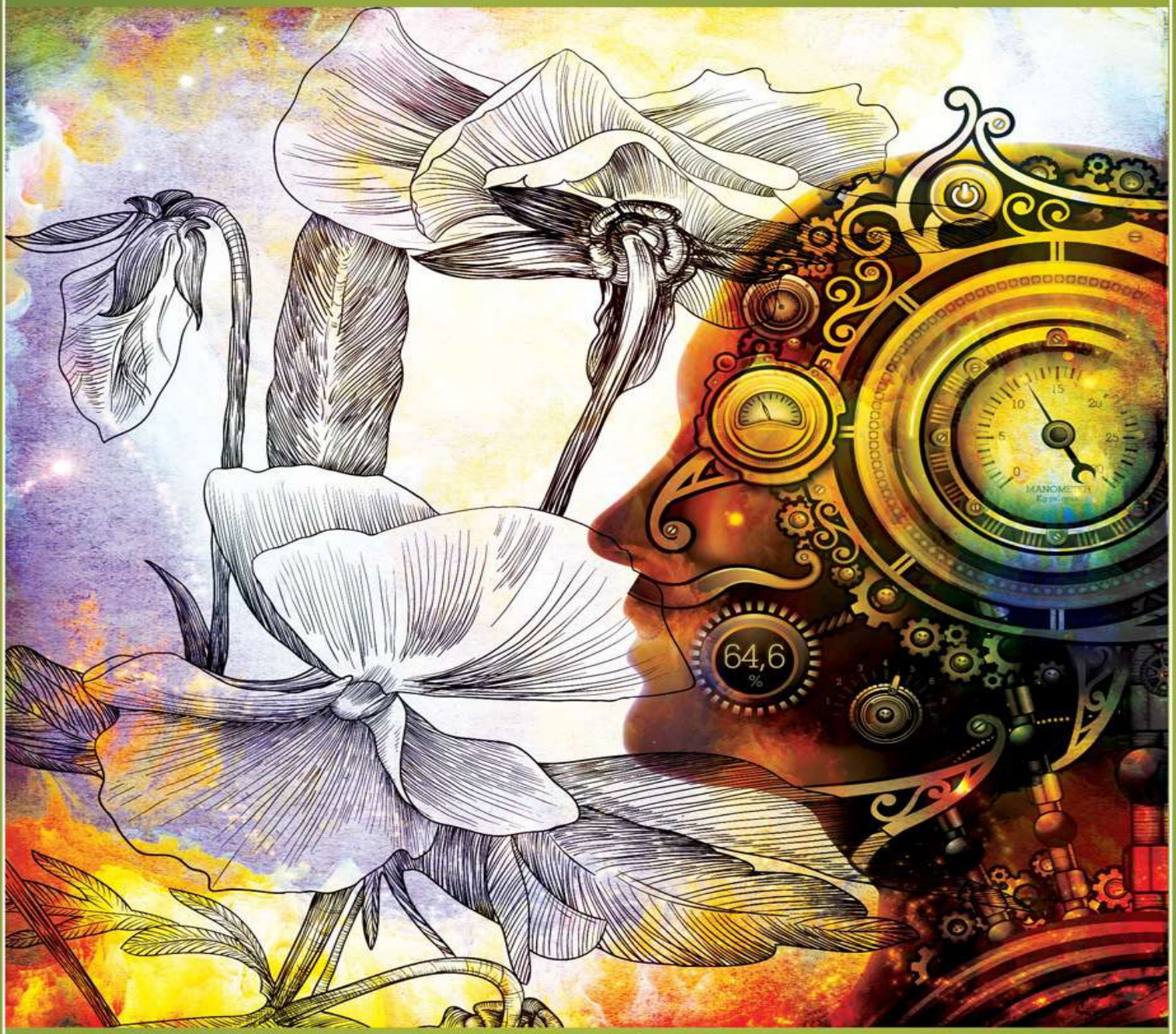
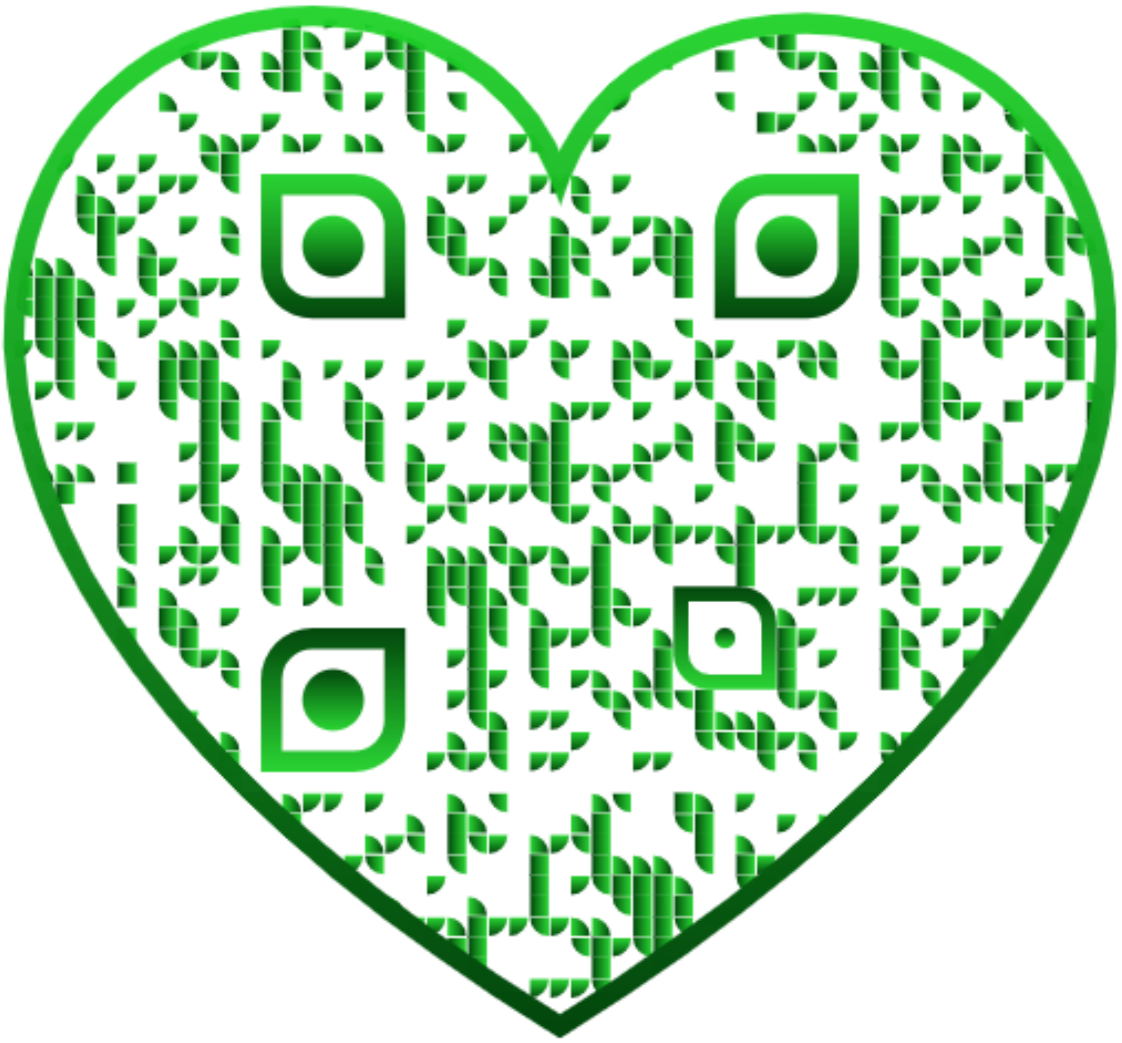


LUCID DREAMING

New Perspectives on Consciousness in Sleep

SCIENCE, PSYCHOLOGY, AND EDUCATION

PRACTICAL AND APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY SERIES



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AN IMPRINT OF ABC-CLIO, LLC
Santa Barbara, California • Denver, Colorado • Oxford, England

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Foreword

In the course of everyday life, we rarely reflect on our global reality orientation and state of consciousness. While "awake" we may *assume* that we are awake, but this is more a tacit acceptance of the default assumption of *real until proven otherwise.* As Harvard philosopher and founder of American psychology William James perspicuously observed, everything we experience seems real, and for us, *is real,* until we have some other contradictory experience that forces us to test and choose among our conflicting experiences. Which are more, and which are less, coherent in terms of what else we know (or think we do) about the world? Thus we must choose what to keep, and what to discard as *unreal*.[1]

Likewise, while dreaming, we do not usually notice that we are dreaming. However, there is a significant exception to this: During what are usually called "lucid dreams," we take explicit note, or *cognizance,* of the fact that we *are* dreaming. This means that not only do we know we are dreaming, but also that we know that we know it. This reflection on our state of consciousness typically comes about, analogously as it does in waking life, when experiential anomalies occur giving rise to the question of how to resolve contradictory evidence. For example, suppose I am talking to Aristotle (according to the testimony of my senses), yet I know Aristotle is many centuries dead. I may decide that the philosopher is "only" a ghost, or lives on in his books, or is an "Aristotle-impersonator" (You know, like an Elvis-impersonator), etc., and continue to dream non-lucidly. Or I may realize that the correct explanation of the Anomalous Aristotle is that *I am now dreaming*. This thought may be in passing and forgotten in a moment, or, by a process of resonant conscious reflection, may lead to a sustained lucid dream lasting many minutes in which metaconsciousness of dreaming is retained while the lucid dream lasts.

During such cognizant dreams, experience and experiments show that to a much greater extent than previously thought, expert dreamers can reason rationally, remember the conditions of waking life, and act voluntarily within the dream upon reflection or in accordance with plans decided upon before sleep—all while remaining soundly asleep, vividly experiencing a dream

world that can appear astonishingly real.

The foregoing is generally how lucid dreaming appeared then and now to people who have experienced it for themselves. Not so for almost all of the experts, that is, those who *hadn't* experienced the state themselves. Thus, until very recently, most sleep and dream researchers regarded lucid dreaming as no more than a curiosity: at best a metaphorical unicorn, rare to the point of being mythical, at worst, an oxymoron (i.e., "How can one be *conscious* while *asleep?*"). Indeed, before eye-movement signaling provided objective proof of its existence, few sleep and dream researchers were willing to credit subjective reports of lucid dreaming. Probably the main reason was a widespread theoretical assumption that being asleep meant being unconscious; thus, claiming to be conscious of anything at all during sleep, including the fact that one is dreaming, is a contradiction in terms.[2] At least one behaviorist philosopher went so far as to contend that even to say "that one is dreaming" would be to speak unintelligible nonsense; so not only was it impossible to be lucid while dreaming, it was impossible to even *think about*, and that was that.[3]

The answer to this sort of theoretical philosophy must be actual experimental evidence. More than thirty years ago my colleagues and I at Stanford proved by means of voluntary eye-movement signals that lucid dreams did occur *during* unequivocal REM sleep—as was then, and is still, conventionally defined.[4] The significance of this technique is often overlooked: for the first time, ever, dreams can be reported, however briefly, *in real time.*

Some researchers have repeatedly and widely claimed for many years that (REM sleep) dreams are intrinsically delusional, lacking reflection, orientation, and reality testing. In short, this is claiming "all dreams are non-lucid," equivalent to the claim "all swans are white." The studies just mentioned and others provided proof to the contrary: Signal-verified lucid dreams occurred during conventionally defined REM sleep. Call this the existence proof of "a non-white swan" or for simplicity and parallelism to Karl Popper's famous example, lucid dreams are "black swans." According to Popper and logic, it only takes a single contradictory instance to falsify the claim "all swans are white" and the "black swan" of lucid dreaming does so for the now-falsified claim that REM dreaming is necessarily non-reflective.

So, lucid dreaming is an experiential and physiological reality. But

whether we should consider it a paradoxical form of sleep or a paradoxical form of waking, or something else entirely, still seems too early to tell. Terms like *sleep*, *waking*, and *dreaming* may be too crude to capture accurately the fine structure of consciousness. Our vocabulary for describing states of consciousness is still too undeveloped.

Yet, for now lucid dreaming should remind us not to close our accounts on the possibilities of human consciousness and the sleeping brain prematurely, and this is where the present anthology may contribute by providing multiple perspectives on this multidimensional topic. Linus Pauling, who was awarded both the Nobel Peace Prize and the Nobel Prize for Chemistry, once told me the secret to having good ideas. First, have many ideas. Then, put those many to the Darwinian Reality Test. This is analogous to the process that we described above for determining what is real and what unreal, where now the criteria is: Which ideas selectively survive the encounter with other ideas and are useful in relation to other ideas? *Eluceat omnibus lux*: Let the light shine out from all.

As I was finishing up this essay, I noticed that today is Ash Wednesday, a day of traditional reflection on mortality. One of my most vivid childhood memories was the annual receiving of a mark of ashes on the forehead while hearing the priest intone: "Remember man that thou art dust, and onto dust thou must return." Many years later, this phrase was reworked and transformed (Father Figure Freud becomes Great Mother—"Nana"—Ground) in an even more memorable and meaningful lucid dream.

Lastwords: A Post-Freudian Nanagram

I am wandering around a grand old hotel that for some reason I take to be "Freud's Hotel." What would a Freudian make of this, I muse . . . It's a dream, of course! Fully lucid, I continue my exploration, but now with the specific intention of finding something interesting in this dream. I ascend a flight of musty stairs and look down a long hallway of elegant decay. A door is ajar and I enter a room. On a bedside table, I discover a piece of paper that appears at first to be a prescription, but upon closer inspection now seems the will or legacy of Anna Freud. On the paper I read the words:

TO DUST, WE MUST;

TO LIGHT, WE MIGHT.[5]

Stephen LaBerge

Notes

1. William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1890).
2. Stephen LaBerge, *Lucid Dreaming* (Los Angeles: J.P. Tarcher, 1985); Stephen LaBerge and Howard Rheingold, *Exploring the World of Lucid Dreaming* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1990).
3. N. Malcolm, *Dreaming* (London: Routledge, 1959), 50.
4. A. Rechtschaffen and A. Kales, Eds., *A Manual of Standardized Terminology, Techniques and Scoring System for Sleep Stages of Human Subjects (Bethesda: HEW Neurological Information Network*, 1968).
5. Personal Journal: SLB592, August 14, 1981.

Introduction

No one knows how far back in history the capacity for lucid dreaming first emerged. We do have evidence, however, from ancient cultures in several parts of the world—from Australian aborigines, Siberian shamans, and Hindu mystics—suggesting that it reflects a rarely actualized but truly universal potential of human dream experience. In recent decades, at least four cultural trends have capitalized on decades of research to make lucid dreaming—defined most simply as *conscious awareness that one is dreaming while in the dream*—a topic of broad public interest.

First, the popular success of science fiction movies like *The Matrix* (1999), *Avatar* (2009), and *Inception* (2011) has fueled the curiosity of millions of people with rousing stories of heroic adventures in the altered realities of dreaming. These films, along with several others in recent years featuring lucid dreaming themes, have created a vibrant cultural space in modern Western society for people to share, discuss, and reflect on these kinds of dream experiences.

Second, new commercial technologies have inspired thousands of people to track their sleep and dreams and attempt to influence them with a wide assortment of sleep masks, devices and smartphone apps.[1] Dream technology is part of a larger trend in the health-related consumer electronics industry, in which wearable technology and the "quantified self movement" are converging to increase public perception of lifestyle issues such as sleep, diet and exercise.

Third, the rise of the Internet has given people much faster ways of sharing information about their lucid dream experiences, leading to a vast proliferation of websites and Internet resources devoted to this phenomenon. Currently, the term "lucid dreaming" is searched for globally more than 200,000 times every month, and a search using the same term brings up 3.4 million webpages in Google.[2] Behind this trend lies decades of studies focused on the easiest ways to learn how to lucid dream, methods which are tested and commented upon daily by thousands of eager would-be lucid dreamers on forums and blogs.[3]

Lastly, the popularity of lucid dreaming books continues to dominate over

most other topics in dream studies in bookstores and booksellers, with the exception of dream interpretation guides. Current best sellers include Robert Waggoner's *Lucid Dreaming: Gateway to the Inner Self* (2009) and B. Alan Wallace's *Dreaming Yourself Awake* (2011), as well as Stephen LaBerge and Howard Rheingold's *Exploring the World of Lucid Dreaming* (1990), which alone has sold well over 100,000 copies.[4] This trend is reminiscent of the 1970s, when Ann Faraday's *Dream Power* (1972) and Patricia Garfield's *Creative Dreaming* (1974) were both international best sellers.[5]

Taken together, these developments have sparked an explosion of public interest in a special type of dreaming long known only to mystics and philosophers.

However, during this same time period, several controversies about lucid dreaming have also arisen that call into question the claims made about its nature and benefits. Many of these concerns center on the issue of *dream control*—one of the core implications of self-awareness in the dream—and what it means to control a dream, how much of a dream can and cannot be controlled, which values and intentions drive the desire to control dreams, and what may be lost when aspects of a dream are manipulated, changed, or eliminated. These are real questions that continue to crop up, from academic presentations to discussions in middle and high schools, and deserve thoughtful consideration. Unfortunately, many Internet resources currently available pay little heed to these concerns. To the contrary, they offer precisely what some portion of the public apparently desires—namely, the ability to gain mastery over their dreams and live out their fantasies. Of course, people are free to behave in their dreams however they wish; ultimately this is an issue of cognitive freedom. Yet we wonder: if people treat lucid dreaming merely as a kind of personal virtual reality where the ego can command the imagination to do its bidding, are they are missing the deeper potentials of lucidity? After all, lucid dreaming has been honored by shamans and sages throughout history for its unparalleled access to the unknown and the ineffable, and for bringing new information to consciousness.

This is why we felt the time was ripe for a book that lays out the best multidisciplinary research on lucid dreaming and uses that information to promote greater public awareness of both the benefits and the potential limits and risks of this powerful capacity of the human psyche. We wanted to bring

together the teachings of different cultural and religious traditions, the findings of various scientific investigations, and the practical experiences of therapists, artists and educators from widely diverse backgrounds, all focusing on the subject of conscious awareness within sleep and dreams. With the help of an all-star roster of contributors, we have set out to capture the breadth and depth of current perspectives of lucid dreaming in a way that is consistent with historical and cross-cultural teachings as well as contemporary scientific and humanistic research and that takes critical questions and ethical challenges fully into account.

To start that process, we believe it is important to locate lucid dreaming within the context of research on dreaming in general. Many aspects of lucid dreaming make more sense and can be more properly evaluated when we view them in relation to other well-known features of human dream experience. Most of the chapters in this book touch on this material in one way or another, but none of them offers an overview of the field as a whole. Thus we thought it useful to include a brief overview here in the introduction.

Lucid Dreaming in the Context of Dream Research

The origin of the modern psychological study of dreams is traditionally associated with the psychoanalytic work of Sigmund Freud and his classic book *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). Freud acknowledged that psychologists had been studying dreams for many decades before him, but from 1900 onward Freud's ideas about dreams dominated psychological theory and practice. He taught that dreams are generated by unconscious instincts rooted in our animal nature, often of a socially taboo or immoral quality. When we go to sleep, our psychological guard goes down and these instincts take advantage of the lapse to seek expression and satisfaction, threatening our ability to get an undisturbed rest. Thus a part of the mind Freud called the "censor" alters the instincts so they can be safely vented in an imaginary, symbolically disguised form—dreams—without disrupting the person's sleep. A clever interpreter can use the individual's free associations to decode the dream, removing the superficial disguise of the "manifest content" to reach the underlying "latent content," the true unconscious meaning of the dream.

Freud mentioned lucid dreams only briefly, as an example of the lengths to which the censor will go to disguise the instinctual wishes at the core of the dream. When a person suddenly realizes within a dream, "I am dreaming —everything that is happening is just a dream," Freud believed that knowledge has the effect of diminishing the reality of the dream, thereby fulfilling the censor's intention of protecting the mind against disturbing intrusions.[6]

Carl Jung, who was originally a follower and close friend of Freud, developed an alternative model that viewed dreams as natural expressions of the psyche, not disguised but rather symbolic of our instincts for growth and wholeness. From Jung's perspective, which has become nearly as influential over the years as Freud's, dreaming can give deep insights into neglected thoughts and emotions, help solve important problems in daily life, stimulate creativity, and promote the overall integration of personality. Jung spoke of the "compensatory" function as the way in which dreaming brings to our awareness aspects of our psyche that have been ignored or repressed. He also spoke of a "prospective" function by which dreams provide anticipatory visions of future potential and possibilities in the dreamer's life. Freud spoke of the primordial roots of dreaming in the prehistory of our species, and Jung developed this notion into a full-blown theory of a "collective unconscious" shared by all humans, in which "archetypes" of instinctual energy and wisdom emerge to guide our lives in dreams, art, religion, and other arenas of imaginative freedom. Jung did not take a great deal of interest in lucid dreaming, although his technique of "active imagination" clearly has similar features. Mary Ziemer's chapter in Volume 1 speaks directly about lucid dreaming in relation to Jungian psychology, and several other chapters also touch on Jung's work. Unfortunately, a widespread notion has developed in recent years that a Jungian approach is opposed to lucid dreaming. As we shall see, the reality is more complex than that.

Many other psychological theories about the nature and function of dreaming have appeared since the work of Freud and Jung, with similar connections to the clinical practice of psychiatry and psychotherapy.[7] This remains highly fertile ground for new dream research, and several chapters in the present book are grounded in this applied depth psychological tradition.

During the heyday of Freudian psychoanalysis, much less attention was paid to experimental dream research. That situation changed in the 1950s,

when sleep laboratory studies found a connection between the subjective experience of dreaming and the brain's activities during various stages of sleep. Despite the initial assumption that dreaming occurs only in the stage of rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, subsequent research has shown that dreaming may occur in many different sleep phases, not just REM. It seems that REM is a reliable *trigger* for dreaming, but not the exclusive *cause* of it. All healthy humans experience several cycles of REM sleep during a normal night's sleep—a fact that supports the notion that everyone dreams every single night, whether or not they remember having any dreams once they wake up.[8]

Some evidence suggests that dreams reported from REM sleep tend to be more vivid, emotional, and active than dreams reported from non-REM sleep. As several chapters in this book mention, lucid dreaming seems more likely to emerge in REM sleep than non-REM sleep, so the content features of REM dreams are an important factor to consider in discussing the fundamental nature of lucid dreaming. However, researchers have found genuine dreams, with plenty of emotion and activity, associated with non-REM stages of sleep (particularly at sleep onset and the later end of the sleep cycle). This suggests future research on lucid dreaming should not focus exclusively on REM sleep, but should rather strive to take into account the psychophysiological features of all aspects of the sleep cycle in which this capacity may emerge. We should be prepared to entertain the hypothesis that lucid dreaming is not just one thing, psychophysiologically speaking. For example, lucidity in REM sleep may differ in many ways from lucidity in the hypnogogic transition from waking to sleeping at the start of each night. An unreflective assumption that all lucid dreams stem from a single type of mind-brain activity may prevent future investigators from recognizing the variety and multiplicity of lucid dream experiences.

For more than 100 years, the key challenge for the science of dreaming has been to formulate a compelling response to the skeptical claim that dreams are nothing but random nonsense—a claim seemingly supported by early laboratory research on the automatic neural activities of REM sleep. Some of the strongest evidence against that claim comes from the tradition of dream content analysis, reaching back to the work of Mary Calkins, Lydiard Horton, and Dorothy Eggan, and systematized by Calvin Hall and Robert Van de Castle.[9] In recent years G. William Domhoff has added to the findings from this approach, leading to the proposal that dream content is in

many ways continuous with waking life concerns. The frequency with which various content categories appear in a person's dreams can provide a surprisingly accurate reflection of that person's most important relationships, activities, conflicts, and aspirations. This "continuity hypothesis" has been studied and validated in the study of many different sets of dreams.[10] Naturally, more research needs to be done to test the range and depth of waking-dreaming continuities, but enough evidence exists now to set aside the "random nonsense" idea as a poor fit for the actual data and findings of numerous research studies using systematic, empirical methods of investigation.

The simplest and most fact-based conclusion to draw from modern scientific research is that *dreams are meaningful*. They have a great deal of psychological structure and relevance to waking life, and their relationship with the complex cycles of brain activity in sleep suggest a deep rootedness in the healthy functioning—and dis-ease—of our minds and bodies.

Although dreaming can clearly be seen as part of the spectrum of ordinary human thought, the experience of dreaming does have some important differences compared to waking life cognition. Experientially, dreaming is visually dominant, darkly emotional, and sometimes strangely, "inappropriately" sexual.[11] Some neuropsychologists have even suggested that REM dreaming can best be described as "an act of aggression."[12] Perhaps waking cognition also has these tendencies, such as in reverie and daydream, but we simply do not experience them so strongly or recall them so clearly. Still, neurological studies have shown how, during dreams, the areas of the brain that are associated with executive functioning (volition, choice, logical thought) are relatively disinhibited, while the "emotional brain" is more active than in waking life. In particular, a little structure called the amygdala goes into overdrive during dreaming, which is notable because this structure is known to mediate our fight-or-flight responses.[13] Finally, dreaming cognition can lead to what are remembered as "Big Dreams," leaving lasting impressions over the lifespan. Big dreams can include strong feelings of both horror and ecstasy, and serve as well as a gateway to nonordinary states of consciousness such as nonduality, experiences of awe and religiosity, and emotional catharsis.[14] These tendencies no doubt have neurochemical associations; discovering those relationships is a task for the next generation of dream researchers.

Patterns of dreaming experience also suggest that the marketing promise to "do anything you want" in a lucid dream may actually have neurobiological challenges and limitations. As the human mind has emerged in modern philosophical discourse as more than a blank slate into which we pour our desires, expectations, and cultural assumptions, the emerging patterns in lucid dreaming have forced us to question the limits of postmodern relativism.[15] The ways that culture, biology, and individual action come together to create the fabric of human experience is a dynamic not yet understood, and lucid dreaming scholarship is at the forefront of efforts to trace and illuminate these threads of meaning and their effects on our lives.

As noted by Daniel Erlacher and Tadas Stumbrys in their chapter in this volume, while lucid dreaming has increasingly become a household word in the last few decades, lucid dreaming induction research has actually cooled considerably since the "golden age" of the 1980s and early 1990s. This trend is mirrored in other aspects of lucidity research as well, ranging from psychophysiological studies to philosophical treatises and spiritually-minded accounts. The *Lucidity Letter*, a newsletter-turned-journal edited chiefly by Jayne Gackenbach, supported much of the early academic research, but published its last edition in 1991. Today, with new laboratory technologies, several strong research communities around the world, and supported by peer-reviewed publications such as *Dreaming* and the *International Journal of Dream Research*, lucid dreaming research is poised to begin a new era of revitalization.

This brief overview of modern scientific research of dreaming will, we hope, give readers an initial orientation as they learn how and why lucid dreaming became a topic of such intense interest in contemporary culture.

We conceived of this anthology as an update to topics discussed in *Conscious Mind, Sleeping Brain*, a groundbreaking collection published in 1988 that first posed many of the questions we continue to study today.[16] In the last quarter-century, lucid dreaming has emerged as a complex phenomenon that requires input from multiple disciplines to expose its many dimensions. In psychology, early questions about the feasibility of lucid dreaming were often paired with heated, unresolved debates of dreamer ethics. Some thought lucidity could impact dreamers' psychological health negatively, while others argued for cognitive freedom. These debates

continue today, but with less hyperbole and more data about situations in which lucid dreaming can actually play an active role in healing, as well as the clinical factors that can assist in making lucid dreaming safe and sustainable for deep explorers.

Meanwhile, the anthropology of lucid dreaming, unlike other scientific fields, has had a growing presence in the lucid dreaming literature since the 1980s. Much of this renaissance is due to the work of anthropologists such as Barbara Tedlock and Douglass Price-Williams, who broke anthropology's reliance on Freudian theory and made way for new trends, including a more active form of participation-observation that allows ethnographers to include their own personal experiences and emotions in the field as relevant data.[17] One major theme in recent ethnographic literature is that lucid dreaming "cultures" are surprisingly common, but are often hidden in plain sight due to the esoteric or privileged nature of advanced dream practices. There are still secrets in the 21st century, it seems. One reason for the widespread secrecy appears to involve the "faith healing" potential of lucid dreaming, as is indicated by its use in shamanism and vision questing rituals and, more chillingly, its prevalent role in dark sorcery. Medical anthropology is beginning to close the loop about both the power and the danger of lucid dreaming, providing us with medically validated concepts like the *placebo effect* and its opposite, the *nocebo effect*, which appear to affect individuals' healing responses via complex interactions of biology, culture, and personal belief.[18] These themes are taken up in several chapters in this anthology, especially Volume 2.

Perhaps the most surprising finding in the last 25 years of lucid dreaming studies is the profound variety of applications that have matured around the concept of self-awareness in the dream. From creative inspiration to sport psychology, and from neuroscience to spiritual discovery, lucid dreaming appears to be a platform for virtually any interest that lights up the human mind. While many of these concepts were discussed as early as the 1980s, current studies have provided valuable data to back some of these early hopeful claims. For example, in recent years neuroscience has experienced its own revolutions in technology and method and, just as LaBerge predicted, lucid dreaming appears to play a role in the revival of neurological dream studies, due to the ability of some dreamers to successfully dream about specific themes in the laboratory. Several chapters in the book, particularly in Volume 1, consider this research in more detail.

In light of these exciting developments and open-ended prospects for the future, it is a striking historical fact that lucid dreaming played essentially no role in psychological research for many decades through the 20th century, but then suddenly burst forth in public awareness. What changed? What made people start paying attention to these types of dreams? Or maybe it is better to ask, what made people *not* pay attention to lucid dreaming before this time?

There is no single answer to these questions. Several chapters in the book, including those by Chris Olsen and G. Scott Sparrow, cover the history of lucid dreaming in more detail than we can provide here. For now, we simply want to introduce readers to two developments in the latter half of the 20th century that definitely shifted the field of dream research in ways that are still relevant today.

The first may be called the "Senoi debate," in reference to the Senoi people of Malaysia, a small tribe of people within the Orang Asli cultural group whose practices of lucid dreaming were described by Kilton Stewart in a journal article in 1953. Stewart's essay was reprinted in Charles Tart's 1969 anthology *Altered States of Consciousness*, a hugely influential work that introduced countless people to the idea of becoming aware within dreams and actively shaping their outcomes. Stewart, who visited the Senoi in 1935, said they taught techniques for lucid dreaming to everyone early in childhood so they could overcome their fears, broaden their awareness, and gain spiritual insights. The profound skills of dream navigation each of the Senoi learned at the beginning of their lives enabled them to create a community of remarkable social and psychological harmony, with no violence, war, or crime to trouble their existence.

Stewart's enchanting portrayal of the Senoi had an enormous impact on the emerging "pop psychology" approach to dreaming in the 1970s and 1980s, which in turn was influenced by larger shifts in humanistic and transpersonal psychology at the time. His work was mentioned in a number of mass-market books that made extensive use of Senoi methods of working with dreams.[19] Stewart's work also generated a rising chorus of critics who questioned his romanticized nature of Senoi life and accused him of fabricating anthropological data. Foremost among these critics was G. William Domhoff, whose 1985 work *The Mystique of Dreams: A Search for Utopia through Senoi Dream Theory* reviewed the anthropological literature

on the Senoi and argued that many of Stewart's claims about specific Senoi practices were unsubstantiated by other researchers. Domhoff concluded that "The Senoi do not practice the so-called Senoi dream theory."[20]

A counter-response to Domhoff's book came from influential dreamworker and Unitarian Universalist minister Jeremy Taylor. Taylor argued that during his 1935 visit Stewart may have had better access to authentic Senoi dream practices than did other anthropologists who came in the years following World War II, after Senoi culture had been ravaged by foreign military forces battling for control of the Pacific theater. Taylor asked:

> If a group of superiorly armed foreigners from a totally different culture descended on your community and stuck you and your family in a stockade for a couple of years and actively prevented you from living your life the way you had always chosen to, would you be likely to "tell all" to those foreigners about your most intimate psycho-spiritual life and practices afterwards? I know I wouldn't, and I am not willing to assume any less about "native informants."[21]

The Senoi debate—and its ongoing reverberation in dream studies—has raised important questions about data quality, cultural expectations, and personal bias in lucid dream research. We regard it as a cautionary tale about the need for critical reflection from many different perspectives when we try to evaluate claims about the practical value of lucid dreaming in other cultures and in our own culture. Anthropologist Diana Riboli touches upon these issues in Volume 2 with her ethnographic reflections of another tribal group of the Orang Asli in Peninsular Malaysia who have openly discussed their lucid dreaming practices, including the shamanic practice of lucid dream violence.

The second development that helped spur greater research interest in lucid dreaming was the scientific validation of lucid dreaming. While the first to do so was Keith Hearne at the University of Liverpool in 1975, Stephen LaBerge and his colleagues in the United States were the first to publish their results in a peer-reviewed journal and be recognized by the scientific community, including in an influential article in the popular magazine *Omni*. Both research groups independently used polysomnographic tools to measure brain activity during sleep and correlate the experience of lucid dreaming with specific predetermined eye moments that served as signals that the subjects were, in fact, making volitional choices while asleep.[22] Their studies

confirmed, using the best sleep laboratory technologies available, that lucid dreaming is not some kind of "micro-awakening," but rather an actual conscious experience capable of reflective thought within the confines of sleep. Furthermore, it was found that lucid dreaming is, to some extent, learnable. Researchers, chiefly led by LaBerge, soon began experimenting with various cognitive-behavioral methods and biofeedback tools to help people learn how to induce new degrees of lucidity in their dreaming. The ability for clinical subjects to be able to lucid dream on command was critical for researchers who often had little time, and less resources, allotted to them for sleep lab trials. Many of the chapters in this book discuss contemporary innovations in teaching people how to cultivate consciousness in sleep, building on this pioneering work and pushing it in new directions.

To be clear from the outset, this is not an encyclopedia or a comprehensive textbook about lucid dreaming, although it is certainly the most varied treatment of the subject in the last quarter-century.[23] But it is still not exhaustive. Even in the space of two volumes, we could not cover all possible topics in lucid dream research, and we regret that we could not include even more chapters by other prominent lucid dreaming scholars.

As we have gathered the chapters, talked with the contributors, and formatted the overall shape of the book, several themes have emerged as especially prominent in the current research terrain. These themes are woven through the chapters to come, sometimes as the primary topic and sometimes as briefly mentioned points that lead off in other directions. We suggest readers consider how the authors of each chapter address each of these general topics:

- How, exactly, does lucidity relate to consciousness?
- How is lucid dreaming applied in meditation, shamanism, and other ritual practices?
- Is lucidity just a trick of the mind or a transcendent form—or forms—of consciousness?
- Does lucid dreaming have a role in healing and psychotherapy, and how can we maximize that role?
- Which techniques are most effective for stimulating awareness within dreams?

- What are the real dangers of lucid dreaming—if any—and the risks of teaching lucid dreaming to the public?

Defining Lucid Dreaming

Several of the chapters discuss in detail the meanings of the term "lucid dream," so we will offer only some initial comments here on the question of a proper definition. The Dutch psychiatrist Frederik van Eeden is usually acknowledged as the first person to use this term in reference to dreams of mental clarity and self-knowledge of the dream state, but as Chris Olsen reveals in his chapter in Volume 2, van Eeden's term did not come out of thin air, but rather from a community of psychologists experimenting with various states of consciousness. Of course, as noted earlier, the phenomenon itself has been known since ancient times, often embedded in esoteric spiritual communities. Essentially, all definitions of lucidity come apart at the seams when looked at in detail, due to cultural biases and assumptions, a topic explored in this collection by anthropologists Roger Lohmann and Shayne A. P. Dahl. Yet here we are, nonetheless, isolating a range of experiences that are alike enough to convincingly call them "lucid dreaming." In contemporary usage, *lucid dreaming means a dream in which one knows that one is dreaming.* We now know there are wide variations in what counts as "knowing" or "awareness"—sometimes people know in a dream that something is weird or amiss, but they do not actively think about their current state of mind. Lucid dreams can also include many different aspects of volition and control, something that will be a key issue in many chapters of this book. One lucid dream may have nothing more than the thought, "I am in a dream," while another may have extended activities in which the individual deliberately changes the dream or engages the dream in a dance of cause and effect. Several researchers in this volume discuss the potential of moving "beyond lucid dreaming," in which the dualism of the knower and the known dissolves as experiences begin to resemble other non-normative states of consciousness, such as kundalini awakenings and unity consciousness.

In recent times, researchers including Alan Moffitt and Tracy Kahan have provided evidence suggesting that the range and complexity of mental activities during certain kinds of dreams may be better described as

"metacognitive" in their heightened qualities of consciousness.[24] *Metacognitive* means thinking about thinking, reflecting on one's own mental processes and emotional experiences. From this perspective, lucid dreaming involves a special kind of metacognition in which the dreamer not only reflects that the experience is occurring within a dream, but also has multiple frames of awareness as participant and observer. The dreamer can then *reflect upon this reflection* and make decisions about how and where to focus attention next.[25] There are many benefits to approaching the phenomenology of lucid dreaming from a metacognitive perspective. It foregrounds the diversity of high-order mental activities that can appear in dreams, including planning, choice, memory, evaluation, inference, and means-to-ends reasoning. It does not hinge on the awareness of being within a dream state—a dream could be extremely metacognitive in terms of sophisticated psychological functioning, yet never include a specific moment when the individual thinks, "I am in a dream." Most importantly, it enables investigators in this area to connect their work with other, much larger bodies of psychological research, potentially expanding the field as a whole.

However, *metacognition* is not a common or felicitous term. Moreover, our goal is certainly not to create a competitive environment about which labels and terminology people should or should not use in this field of study. We chose to title the book *Lucid Dreaming* because this term has reached a broad level of public acceptance and we want to respect the significance of that cultural achievement. Rather than replacing the term with a confusing alternative, we want to refine and deepen its meaning.

Chapter Summaries

The organization of this two-volume edition is, to be honest, somewhat arbitrary. We knew from the outset that there is no obvious way of dividing lucid dream research into two neat, separate piles. Our editorial decisions were, at this level, driven more by tone, theme, and aesthetics than by sharply demarcated categories. The first volume gathers those chapters most focused on scientific research, psychological experiments and clinical theory, and educational practices, while the second volume's chapters concentrate more on issues of history, culture, art, and religion. With some chapters, it was

easy to place them in one or the other volume. With most of them, however, it was more of a judgment call, as the contributors discussed themes from both volumes. In part, this was by design: We encouraged all the contributors from the outset to draw on multiple sources of research, to include their own lucid dreaming experiences if relevant, and to offer their responses to the major debates and controversies in the field. Many chapters include these personal dreams, most of which have not been published before; they can be found at a glance because they are treated with italics and block quotes in the text. As a result, each chapter covers more ground than a traditional journal article and includes more personal experiences and reflections than would be found in a typical entry in a reference book.

Volume 1

The first volume in *Lucid Dreaming* is organized around three themes: science, psychology, and education.

In Chapter 1, Kelly Bulkeley reviews the demographic data on lucid dreaming and presents the current state of knowledge on the patterns of lucid dreaming frequency and content. He also offers new survey data and content analysis methods, drawing from the Sleep and Dream Database (SDDb), an open-access digital archive and search engine.

In Chapter 2, Ursula Voss and Georg Voss present a neurobiological model for lucid dreaming. This model is based on recent empirical and subjective studies of lucid dreaming cognition in the laboratory, and it integrates with J. Allan Hobson's revised model for consciousness to place different kinds of lucid dreams, as well as other forms of dreams, on a continuum of states of arousal and spaces of consciousness.

In Chapter 3, Brigitte Holzinger reviews the history of lucid dreaming in psychotherapy, with a special focus on Gestalt psychotherapy and the work of German psychotherapist and lucid dreaming pioneer Paul Tholey, whose writings are mostly unfamiliar to English-speaking audiences. Holzinger presents case studies and discusses the benefits and challenges inherent in using (and teaching) lucid dreaming as a psychotherapeutic technique.

In Chapter 4, James F. Pagel discusses sleep meditation as the physiological basis for lucid dreaming, using the latest research on the electrical activity of the brain. Pagel reviews the historical and neurobiological associations between lucid dreaming and meditation and

suggests that classic lucidity may have different physiological signatures than modern lucid dreaming as recorded by the electroencephalograph (EEG) in the sleep laboratory.

In Chapter 5, Tadas Stumbrys and Daniel Erlacher review the science of lucid dreaming induction, revealing surprising conclusions about which methods and practices have the most empirical support for triggering lucidity. They also suggest new avenues with promise, in hopes of perfecting the science of induction for the benefits of laboratory scientists and the public at large.

In Chapter 6, Lee Irwin focuses on memory, imagination, and meaning in lucid dreaming. Informed by transpersonal psychology, ethnography, and personal experience, Irwin assumes that lucid dreaming has noetic dimensions that make verbal descriptions of the remembered experience difficult to translate, but he suggests that efforts to do so can yield remarkable gifts, such as a total re-enchantment of waking life.

In Chapter 7, Tim Post continues the discussion of lucid dreaming induction. He notes that learning how to lucid dream is still quite challenging for typical learners and recommends new approaches, including the role of online education.

In Chapter 8, Mary Ziemer describes how lucid dreaming can catalyze the aims of Jungian therapy by revitalizing the ancient art of psychological alchemy within the dream. Asking "What would Jung have done?" had he explored lucid dreaming as an extension of his imaginal work, she unearths the new potential for lucidity that may have been hidden in Jungian mythos all along.

In Chapter 9, Isaac Y. Taitz continues the discussion of the healing potential of lucid dreaming. He reviews clinical applications for lucid dreaming therapy—including nightmare treatment, sport psychology, and performance enhancement—and considers new possibilities on the horizon.

In Chapter 10, Robert Waggoner suggests a developmental model that can be applied to dreamers as they become more familiar with lucid dreaming. Waggoner couches this model within the framework of depth psychology, and he outlines stages of growth that reflect a process of learning, assimilation, and conceptual adaptation.

In Chapter 11, Jorge Conesa-Sevilla presents an ecopsychological critique of the "fetishization" of lucid dreaming, arguing that lucid dreaming cannot

be isolated from the totality of experiences that form an authentic human life and that connect us to the health of our planet.

In Chapter 12, Jayne Gackenbach and Harry Hunt reflect on the deeper associations between lucid dreaming and video game play. They conclude that gaming enhances the experience of lucidity along the lines of meditators' experiences of lucidity. These findings can be interpreted equally in terms of a psychology of imaginative absorption and a sociology of collective consciousness.

In Chapter 13, David J. Hufford suggests that lucid dreaming has a natural affinity with both dreams of the dead and experiences of sleep paralysis as extraordinary REM events. Hufford argues that each of these phenomena is perceived as spiritual by those who have them not only because they are nonphysical and compellingly realistic, but also because they often incorporate anomalous events such as telepathy, precognition, and spirit contact.

In Chapter 14, Ryan Hurd suggests lucid dreaming is part of a larger complex of extraordinary experience that poetically engages the "Paleolithic imagination." Hurd argues that lucid dreaming can varyingly reflect meditative states as well as shamanistic states of consciousness, which can offer new—or forgotten—context for paradoxical events such as lucid nightmares, initiation dreams and sleep paralysis visions.

In Chapter 15, G. Scott Sparrow contemplates one of the central debates of lucid dreaming: the role of dream control. By reviewing how this issue played out in the lucid dreaming research community in the 1980s, Sparrow presents a nondual model of lucid dreaming that achieves the classic healing aims of psychotherapy while providing room for creativity and freedom throughout the lifespan.

Volume 2

Volume 2 is organized around the themes of culture, religion and spirituality, and the arts.

In Chapter 1, Eleanor Rosch discusses the Tibetan Buddhist practices of lucid dreaming, framing this ancient dreamwork tradition within its own cultural milieu. Rosch points out that many aspects of Tibetan dream practices present clear challenges to Western science and may shake the

foundations of our assumptions about minds in psychology.

In Chapter 2, Roger Lohmann and Shayne A. P. Dahl present a unique overview of cultural models for lucid dreaming that can be found around the world. They show how definitions of what lucid dreaming is, what it makes possible, and what it is used for vary within and between societies, generating notions of waking and sleeping awareness that are very different from popular Western notions of lucidity.

In Chapter 3, Clare R. Johnson reviews current research on the potential of lucid dreaming as a creative tool. She concludes that the exuberance, deep peace, or sense of magic experienced inside a lucid dream is a tonic for the creative mind, enabling a return to the state of naïve wonder and curiosity from which creative ideas spring.

In Chapter 4, Diana Riboli reflects on the significant role played by lucid dreaming in the representation and implementation of violence—symbolic and literal—in shamanic indigenous contexts. Riboli's field experiences in Nepal and Malaysia provide fresh ethnographic context for the application of shamanic lucid dreaming for both healing and malevolent purposes, including shamanic duels, hexing, and animal transformation.

In Chapter 5, Chris Olsen presents an original historiography of lucid dreaming from the Enlightenment to the early 20th century. He reviews the extensive and often very public role of lucid dreaming throughout the centuries in philosophical thought, popular press, occultism, the Covert Enlightenment, and the beginnings of modern psychology—all of which was eclipsed and eventually forgotten as Freudian and behaviorist theories rose to prominence in the early 20th century.

In Chapter 6, Curtiss Hoffman highlights the influence of big dreams, including elements of lucidity, in the fictional works of J. R. R. Tolkien, including *Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion*. Tolkien also loosely fictionalized the actual events of meetings with his literary fraternity, The Inklings, and Hoffman argues that these largely unknown manuscripts, *The Notion Club Papers*, as well as Tolkien's letters with the other members, reveal how dreams explicitly influenced his creative endeavors.

In Chapter 7, Kelly Bulkeley and Bernard Welt discuss the historical interplay of film, cultural dynamics, and lucid dreaming, focusing on cinematic works that successfully convey aspects of lucid dreaming that are grounded in real human experiences and that stimulate a vivid sense of

philosophical wonder about the nature of life, consciousness, and reality. The films discussed include *Peter Ibbetson*, *Dead of Night*, *Dreamscape*, *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, *The Matrix*, *Waking Life*, and *Inception.*

In Chapter 8, Mehrdad Fakour describes how modern Sufi perspectives on lucid dreaming can be seen as a trek beyond the land of archetypes and an odyssey toward self-realization. Fakour aligns Sufi lucid dreaming with other spiritual systems that prize mystical experiences not as a goal in their own right, but rather as signposts along the way to deeper levels of mindfulness and inner clarity.

In Chapter 9, Shayne A. P. Dahl considers the question of potentially harmful consequences that lucid dreaming could pose, especially for those venturing into the dream practices of societies other than one's own. Drawing on fieldwork with a Blackfoot-speaking community on the Blood Indian Reserve in Alberta, Canada, Dahl also presents key examples in the ethnographic record and current events.

In Chapter 10, Robin Ridington describes his fieldwork with the Dane-zaa, a First Nations People of British Columbia. For the Dane-zaa, lucid dreaming can be described as an altered state in which wise stories become immediate and real. This chapter contextualizes lucid dreaming both as part of the vision quest complex and as a powerful prophetic art, the knowledge of which is carefully passed down through elders known as Dreamers.

In Chapter 11, Fariba Bogzaran discusses the history and ongoing research on *hyperspace lucidity.* In Bogzaran's transdisciplinary and ever-evolving methods, lucid dreaming is viewed as "Creative Consciousness" in which existential inquiry can be addressed through integral practices in hopes of transforming perception and ultimately impacting the construction of one's reality.

In Chapter 12, Ted Esser reviews his original research into kundalini, nonduality, and the divine through a lucid dreaming meditation protocol. Esser argues that the powerful spiritual experiences inherent in lucid dreaming have implications for psychotherapeutic and spiritual counseling settings as well as philosophical implications regarding lucid dreaming's potential role in helping solve the "hard problem" of consciousness.

In Chapter 13, A. Muhammad Ma'ruf explores the religious and historical strands that connect Islamic culture and lucid dreaming, with a special emphasis on historical Sufi figures. Ma'ruf also reviews ideological and

philosophical challenges in modern Islam and Sufism to the Western concept of lucid dreaming, pointing out the chasms and providing cultural bridges in the spirit of a renewed interfaith dialogue.

In Chapter 14, George Gillespie describes his own phenomenological explorations into dreamless sleep, drawing parallels with and demarking differences between his mystical experiences and those described within the traditions of Buddhist and Hindu dream yogas.

In Chapter 15, Ken Kelzer revisits two powerful lucid dreams from a vantage of 30 years, reflecting on how their mystical properties, which were immediately felt, have continued to play a prominent role in his psychospiritual development throughout his life.

Concluding Remarks

Altogether, these essays represent a snapshot of the current state of lucid dreaming research. Even though lucid dreaming scholarship has certainly matured since its early days, there are still no final truths, no sacrosanct conclusions yet to draw. As we see it, the central challenge is making sure the study of lucid dreaming does not become a hall of mirrors in which researchers' interests, goals, and biases are merely reflected back and reified as Truth (indeed, the same challenge faces dream research in general). Through the practice of multiplicity—and with continued interdisciplinary cooperation—research on lucid dreaming promises to continue offering new insight, clarity, and inspiration for those who aspire to greater consciousness, in their dreams and in waking life.

Kelly Bulkeley and Ryan Hurd

Notes

1. One smartphone app known as Dream: ON, organized by University of Hertfordshire professor Richard Wiseman, was downloaded over 300,000 times in its first week of availability after being launched at the Edinburgh International Science Festival in 2012. Another media success is the lucid dreaming mask known as Remee, produced by BitBanger Labs, which conducted a successful crowd funding campaign that garnered over half a million dollars in start up capital through Kickstarter.com.

2. Accessed from Google's search engine and Keyword Planning Tool, October 21, 2013. This average represents only a portion of the known, indexed Internet.
3. Online "ezines" such as *Lucid Dream Exchange*, edited by Robert Waggoner and Lucy Gillis, also have been publishing first-hand accounts of lucid dreams on a quarterly basis for over a decade. In 2012, the magazine became the *Lucid Dream Experience.*
4. Robert Waggoner, *Lucid Dreaming: Gateway to the Inner Self* (Needham, MA: Moment Point Press, 2009); B. Alan Wallace, *Dreaming Yourself Awake: Lucid Dreaming and Tibetan Dream Yoga for Insight and Transformation* (Boston: Shambhala, 2012); Stephen LaBerge and Howard Rheingold, *Exploring the World of Lucid Dreaming* (New York: Ballantine, 1990); Stephen LaBerge, personal communication, 2/26/2014
5. Also having an impact on the popular imagination were fantasy novels about lucid dreaming, including Ursula LeGuin's *The Word for World Is Forest* (1976) and Graham Joyce's *Dreamside* (1991).
6. An interesting paragraph was added in the 1909 second edition of *The Interpretation of Dreams*: "there are some people who are quite clearly aware during the night that they are aware and who thus seem to possess the faculty of consciously directing their dream. If for instance, the dreamer of this kind is dissatisfied with the turn taken by a dream, he can break it off without waking off and start it again in a new direction, just as a popular dramatist may under pressure give his play a happier ending." In a second comment in this edition, Freud suggests, "Or another time, if his dream had led him into a sexually exciting situation, he can think to himself, 'I won't go on with this dream any further and exhaust myself with an emission; I'll hold back for a real situation instead.' " Freud added another paragraph of text to the book's fourth edition in 1914, integrating the concept of lucidity with his wish fulfillment theory: "The Marquis d'Hervey de Saint-Deny . . . claimed to have acquired the power of accelerating the course of his dreams just as he pleased, and of giving them any direction he chose. It seems as though in his case the wish to sleep had given place to another preconscious wish, namely to observe his dreams and enjoy them. Sleep is just as compatible with a wish of this sort as it is with a mental reservation to wake up if some particular condition is fulfilled." Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* trans. James Strachey (New York: Avon Books, 1965), 611.
7. A good place to start is Clara E. Hill, ed., *Dream Work in Therapy: Facilitating Exploration, Insight, and Action* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2004).
8. For a discussion of this and other issues in the relationship of sleep and dreaming, see Edward F. Pace-Schott et al., eds., *Sleep and Dreaming: Scientific Advances and Reconsiderations* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
9. Calvin Hall and Robert Van de Castle, *The Content Analysis of Dreams* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1966).
10. G. William Domhoff, *The Scientific Study of Dreams: Neural Networks, Cognitive Development, and Content Analysis* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2003).
11. See Allan Hobson, *Dreaming: An Introduction to Sleep* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2002) and Rosalind Cartwright, *The Twenty-Four Hour Mind* (New York: Oxford Press, 2012).
12. Patrick McNamara et al., "REM and NREM Sleep Mentation," *International Review of Neurobiology* 92 (2010): 69–86. http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20870063.
13. Claude Gottesmann, "A Neurobiological History of Dreaming," in *The New Science of Dreaming*, volume 1, ed. Deirdre Barrett and Patrick McNamara (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007), 27.
14. Kelly Bulkeley and Ernest Hartmann, "Big Dreams: An Analysis Using Central Image Intensity, Content Analysis, and Word Searches," *Dreaming* 21 (2011): 157–167.
15. Antonio Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain* (New York: Putnam, 1994); George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its*

Challenge to Western Thought (New York: Basic Books, 1999); Steven Pinker, *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature* (New York: Viking, 2002).

16. Jayne Gackenbach and Stephen LaBerge, eds., *Conscious Mind, Sleeping Brain* (New York: Plenum, 1988). Jayne Gackenbach's 1991 edited collection *Lucidity* is also a valuable early collection that set the standard for multidisciplinary cooperation in this field: *Lucidity* 10, no. 1–2 (1991).
17. See Barbara Tedlock, ed., *Dreaming: Anthropological and Psychological Interpretations* (Sante Fe: School of American Research Press, 1992).
18. R. A. Hahn and A. Kleinman, "Belief as Pathogen, Belief as Medicine: 'Voodoo Death' and the 'Placebo Phenomenon' in Anthropological Perspective," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (1983): 3, 16–19; L. Colloca and F. G. Miller, "The Nocebo Effect and Its Relevance for Clinical Practice," *Psychosomatic Medicine* 73, no. 7 (2011): 598–603; Shelley Adler, *Sleep Paralysis: Night-mares, Nocebos and the Mind-Body Connection* (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 2011).
19. For example see Faraday, 1972; Garfield, 1974; Strephon Kaplan Williams, *The Jungian Senoi Dreamwork Manual* (Berkeley: Journey Press, 1980).
20. G. William Domhoff, *The Mystique of Dreams: A Search for Utopia through Senoi Dream Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 65. See also Robert K. Dentan, "Lucidity, Sex and Horror in Senoi Dreamwork," in *Conscious Mind, Sleep Brain*, eds. Jayne Gackenbach and Stephen LaBerge (New York: Plenum Press, 1988), 37–63.
21. Jeremy Taylor, "Debate on the Legacy of the Senoi," *ASD Newsletter* 12, no. 2 (1995): 32; also see John Leary, *Violence and the Dream People* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1995), 10.
22. Keith Hearne, "Lucid Dreams: An Electro-physiological and Psychological Study" (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Liverpool, UK, 1978); Stephen LaBerge et al., "Lucid Dreaming Verified by Volitional Communication during REM Sleep," *Perception and Motor Skills* 52 (1980): 727–732; LaBerge, S., & Gackenbach, J. I. (1987, April). "Power trips: Control your dreams," *OMNI*, 9(7), 1–4.
23. This anthology was inspired by Gackenbach and LaBerge's (1988) pioneering collection *Conscious Mind, Sleeping Brain*, which first posed many of these research questions as well as provided the platform for discussing many initial trends in lucid dreaming scholarship.
24. See Alan Moffitt, Milton Kramer, and Robert Hoffmann, eds., *The Functions of Dreaming* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993); Tracey Kahan and Patricia M. Simone, "Where Neurocognition Meets the Master: Attention and Metacognition in Zen," in *Soul, Psyche, Brain: New Directions in the Study of Religion and Brain-Mind Science,* ed. Kelly Bulkeley (New York: Palgrave, 2005), 113–137.
25. See Tracey Kahan and Stephen LaBerge, "Lucid Dreaming as Metacognition: Implications for Cognitive Science," *Consciousness and Cognition* 3 (1994): 246–264; and also Tracey Kahan and Stephen LaBerge, "Dreaming and Waking: Similarities and Differences Revisited," *Consciousness and Cognition* 20 (2011): 494–514.

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1

Lucid Dreaming by the Numbers

Kelly Bulkeley

Introduction

Two related questions have intrigued lucid dream researchers for several decades. First, how many people in the general population have experienced a lucid dream? In other words, are such dreams an obscure rarity or a more widespread phenomenon? Second, what happens in lucid dreams? Does their content differ significantly from the content of nonlucid dreams? In the 1988 book *Conscious Mind, Sleeping Brain* she edited with Stephen LaBerge, Jayne Gackenbach wrote two chapters addressing these questions: "Psychological Content of Lucid versus Nonlucid Dreams" and "Individual Differences Associated with Lucid Dreaming" (co-authored with Thomas Snyder).[1] These chapters summarized the current state of knowledge on the patterns of lucid dreaming frequency and content. Since then, new data have emerged from a large demographic survey of Austrian adults in 1998, conducted by R. Stepansky, Brigitte Holzinger, and their colleagues, that included a question about frequency of awareness in dreaming ("Austrian Dream Behavior: Results of a Representative Population Survey"[2]). Additionally, Michael Schredl and Daniel Erlacher examined the demographics of lucid dreaming in populations of German students in 2004 ("Lucid Dreaming Frequency and Personality"[3]) and adults in 2011 ("Frequency of Lucid Dreaming in a Representative German Sample"[4]). In collaboration with a team of researchers in Japan, Erlacher and Schredl have also studied lucid dreaming in a group of Japanese university students in 2008 ("The Incidence of Lucid Dreaming within a Japanese University Student Sample"[5]).

This chapter offers new survey data to build on the work of these

researchers and extend it with digital technologies designed specifically for the study of dreams. The survey material is drawn from the Sleep and Dream Database (SDDb), an open-access digital archive and search engine containing thousands of dream reports plus accompanying demographic information about the individual dreamers.[6]The research tools available on the SDDb have many advantages relative to previous methods of analysis—they are fast, precise, flexible, transparent, and easy to replicate. Like any form of technology, these tools have their limits. Indeed, they are very good at helping answer some questions, but quite useless for answering others. Fortunately, they are well suited for the purpose of addressing the two questions at hand regarding the frequency and content of lucid dreams.

The goal here is to generate data-driven hypotheses about lucid dreaming that can be tested and improved in the future. This chapter considers previous research findings in light of material in the SDDb, looking for points of confirmation as well as novel insights. As seems appropriate given the early development of these digital research tools, the statistical methods used in this chapter remain simple and straightforward. More advanced statistical methods can be applied to these data by researchers who want to do so, using the "download as .CSV file" function on the SDDb website. My proposal in this chapter is to start by identifying the most obvious patterns in the data—the low-hanging fruit, as it were—and to develop hypotheses from there. Such a minimalist approach will enable us to confirm or deny some common claims about lucid dreaming, thereby clearing the way for more subtle and sophisticated analyses in the years to come.

This chapter reverses the order in which Gackenbach treated these topics in *Conscious Mind, Sleeping Brain*. First I present results from two demographic surveys asking questions about the frequency of lucid dream experience. Then I examine the patterns of content in two different sets of lucid dream reports. By the end of the chapter, we should be in a good position to formulate an updated summary of basic quantitative knowledge about the frequency and content of lucid dreams.

Lucid Dreaming Frequency

In "Individual Differences Associated with Lucid Dreaming," Snyder and

Gackenbach considered several psychological factors that have been tested for their relevance to lucid dreaming. In their review of previous research on the frequency of lucid dream experiences, they found a wide variety of estimates that differed according to the participant population and the methodology used. In light of these factors, Snyder and Gackenbach concluded that "conservative estimates of the incidence of lucid dreaming indicate that about 58% of the population have experienced a lucid dream at least once in their lifetime and that some 21% report such dreams more often (one or more per month)."[7] In terms of demographics, they found no differences in gender, but did identify higher proportions of lucid dreaming in young people compared to older people. They cited one study that found a racial difference (higher lucid dreaming among blacks than whites) but no differences on income or education. Snyder and Gackenbach also cited a study connecting higher rates of lucid dreaming with an interest in yoga. Intriguingly, they found evidence that frequent lucid dreamers tend to be people who perform well at nonvisual spatial tasks: "Visualization or imagery per se can therefore be said to not be essential for understanding the lucid process. Rather, selective nonvisual imagery in combination with internally oriented perspectives would appear to be keys for opening the portal to lucidity."[8]

The study of Stepansky et al. drew upon the survey responses of 1,000 Austrian adults, selected as a representative sample of that European nation's demographics. Among the survey questions was one about lucid dreaming: "Do you sometimes realize in your dreams you are dreaming?" Twenty-six percent of the participants said they occasionally had this experience, 64 percent said they had not had this experience, and 10 percent did not answer. More detailed study of the 26 percent with occasional lucid dreams revealed that they differed considerably from the participants who had no lucid dreams: "Like nightmare sufferers, they [the lucid dreamers] report higher dream recall frequency, and they are more likely to report pleasant dreams, dreams in color, and recurrent dreams."[9]

Schredl and Erlacher's 2004 study asked a group of 444 German college students (376 female, 68 male) about lucid dream experience, with 82 percent saying they had experienced a lucid dream at least once in their lives and 37 percent having a lucid dream at least once a month. None of the "Big Five" personality factors had any special influence on lucid dreaming frequency.

Schredl and Erlacher's 2011 study looked at 919 German adults (497 female, 422 male), 51 percent of whom said they had experienced lucid dreaming at least once in their lives; 20 percent reported having lucid dreams at least once a month. More women than men had lucid dreams, and more young people than older people. No major differences were found on other demographic factors. In both studies, Schredl and Erlacher suggested that lucid dreaming frequency is closely related to a person's general dream recall frequency, a point in line with the finding of Stepansky et al. about higher rate of dream recall for lucid dreamers.

In their 2008 study of Japanese university students, Erlacher et al. asked questions of 153 participants (93 female, 61 male) with a mean age of 19 years. The rates of lucid dreaming were somewhat lower than for other cultural groups, with 47 percent of the Japanese students reporting they had experienced a lucid dream at least once in their lives and 19 percent having lucid dreams frequently (once a month or more). Erlacher et al. speculate that these relatively low figures might reflect differing cultural attitudes and linguistic understandings of dreams among Asian and Western European populations. Nevertheless, Erlacher et al. conclude that "the prevalence rate for the Japanese student sample is still high and it can be assumed that the phenomenon [lucid dreaming] is known to most Japanese people."[10]

The Sleep and Dream Database contains two sets of data that can be used to generate a comparative analysis with the findings of these researchers.

1. The Demographic Survey 2007 included 705 participants (American adults 18 years or older; 367 female, 338 male) who responded to a random-digit-dialing telephone survey asking them several questions about their sleep and dreams. One of these questions asked if they had ever experienced a dream in which they were aware of being in a dream and able to control it. This is the highest standard of lucidity—both awareness *and* control—used in any of the surveys considered here.
2. The Demographic Survey 2010 included 2,992 participants (American adults 18 years or older; 1,058 female, 1,912 male) who responded to a randomly administered online survey asking them several questions about their sleep and dreams. Two of these questions regarded lucid dreaming: The first asked if they had ever experienced a dream in which they were aware of being in a dream, and the second asked if

they had ever experienced a dream in which they were able to control the dream.

Starting with the Demographic Survey 2007 in Table 1.1, a slight gender imbalance appeared, as 41 percent of the female participants reported having had a dream of lucid awareness and control compared to 36 percent of the male participants.

The results show a strong age difference between younger and older participants, with steadily fewer "yes" answers over time. Nonwhites reported a higher frequency of lucid dream experiences than whites, and political liberals reported higher rates than political conservatives (likely due to more young people in the political liberals group, as pointed out to me by Michael Schredl). People with higher education and higher annual income tended to be more likely to answer "yes" to this question, while people with lower education and lower annual income were more likely to answer "no." Region of residence was associated with minimal differences, with slightly fewer "yes" answers from participants living in the South.

Other than the age imbalance, none of the differences noted in this survey is dramatically large. They are real differences, but modest ones. The participants in this survey were generally more alike than different; their answer frequencies to this question did not vary much no matter which segment of the social/cultural/economic spectrum they represented (with the possible exception of people at the top of the income scale). These results seem comparable to those obtained by Schredl and Erlacher, whose sample of German adults showed differences on gender and age but less striking differences on other demographic variables.

Turning to the Demographic Survey 2010 (Table 1.2), the question from the previous survey was divided into two separate questions, one regarding awareness within a dream and the other regarding control within a dream. The results of this second survey show consistently higher yes answers for lucid *awareness* as compared to lucid *control*. The female participants reported slightly higher frequencies of both types of dreams than did the male participants.

The youngest female participants had the highest frequency of lucid awareness, with a big drop-off in the older age groups. The male frequency of lucid awareness rose slightly in the 30- to 49-year-old age group, then fell for the older groups. A slight racial difference appeared, with Hispanics having

the highest frequency of "yes" answers to both questions. Political liberals, progressives, and libertarians had higher frequencies of lucid dreaming compared to political conservatives. There was little difference between people who did and did not graduate from college. In terms of income, people at the lower end of the economic scale tended to have higher frequencies of "yes" answers. The region of residence question showed higher frequencies among people living in the Western quadrant of the United States.

Table 1.1 Demographic Survey 2007

	Lucid Awareness and Control		
	Yes(%)	**No(%)**	**No Answer(%)**
Gender			
Female	41	56	3
Male	36	60	4
Age			
18–29	51	49	1
30–39	47	51	3
40–49	36	62	3
50–64	33	61	6
Over 64	23	72	6
Race			
White	36	60	4
Nonwhite	44	54	2
Political Ideology			
Liberal	44	52	4
Moderate	37	60	3
Conservative	34	62	4
Education			
High school or less	33	63	3
Post-high school	43	56	2
College graduate	41	52	7
Annual Income			
Less than $30K	36	63	1

$30–50K	33	64	3
$50–100K	43	54	1
$100K or more	51	47	2
Region			
Northeast	39	56	4
Central	41	56	2
South	35	62	3
West	40	57	2

Table 1.2 Demographic Survey 2010

	Lucid Awareness		**Lucid Control**	
	Yes(%)	**No(%)**	**Yes(%)**	**No(%)**
Gender				
Male	67.55	32.45	36.8	63.2
Female	74.66	25.34	40.63	59.37
Age: Male				
18–29	69.23	30.77	42.98	57.02
30–49	73.33	26.67	46.15	53.85
50–64	68.31	31.69	38.97	61.03
65+	60.92	39.08	23.76	76.24
Age: Female				
18–29	86.79	13.21	56.86	43.14
30–49	81.31	18.69	54.07	45.93
50–64	74.71	25.29	37.79	62.21
65+	66.4	33.6	29.31	70.69
Race/Ethnicity				
White	70.16	29.84	36.89	63.11
African American	68.46	31.54	34.68	65.32
Hispanic	73.02	26.98	55.31	44.69
Asian	59.02	40.98	32.69	67.31
Other	67.08	32.92	37.18	62.82
Political Ideology				

Progressive	76.68	23.32	48.43	51.57
Liberal	74.28	25.72	42.18	57.82
Moderate	71.52	28.48	35.17	64.83
Libertarian	74.37	25.63	47.32	52.68
Conservative	64.16	35.84	32.05	67.95
Very conservative	66.17	33.83	35.88	64.12
Education				
No college degree	68.61	31.39	36.3	63.7
College degree or higher	70.87	29.13	39.01	60.99
Annual Income				
<$25K/year	76.25	23.75	50	50
$25–35K	66.49	33.51	40.45	59.55
$35–50K	72.73	27.27	39.04	60.96
$50–75K	70.33	29.67	37.14	62.86
$75–100K	68.27	31.73	37.74	62.26
$100K+	71.37	28.63	39.3	60.7
Region of Residence				
East	69.46	30.54	37.83	62.17
Central Great Lakes	69.54	30.46	34.21	65.79
South	67.55	32.45	36.43	63.57
West	73.57	26.43	43.79	56.21
Religious Worship Service Attendance				
Weekly or more	64.81	35.19	33.33	66.67
Weekly	68.48	31.52	35.03	64.97
1–2 times per month	69.06	30.94	36.95	63.05
Holidays	64.94	35.06	29.27	70.73
Rarely	72.08	27.92	41.01	58.99
Never	73.45	26.55	43.15	56.85
Tea Party Views				
Very important	70.52	29.48	38.01	61.99
Somewhat important	68.06	31.94	36.9	63.1
Somewhat unimportant	61.94	38.06	31.71	68.29

Not important	71.94	28.06	39.59	60.41
Passport Ownership				
Yes	69.79	30.21	38.36	61.64
No/not sure	70.53	29.47	37.78	62.22

Note: These figures represent adjusted counts, meaning that "not sure" answers have been removed (except in the last question about passport ownership, in which it was merged with the "no" answers prior to my analysis).

The Demographic Survey 2010 asked several questions not included in the previous surveys. For example, people who attended religious worship services at least once a week were *less* likely to answer "yes" to the lucid awareness and lucid control questions than people who rarely or never attended such services. People who supported the "Tea Party" conservative political movement (which was newly emergent in 2010 at the time of this survey) *and* people who did *not* support the Tea Party had higher frequencies than people who had no strong opinion about the Tea Party one way or the other. No difference was found between people who did and did not have a passport.

The limits of these two demographic surveys are considerable. The questions were clearly stated, but the participants may have interpreted the notions of awareness and control in a dream differently, leading them to give variable and off-point answers. The questions asked for at least one instance in the person's entire life, the lowest threshold possible and one subject to the vagaries of people's memories. This may be a factor in the age decrease noted previously—older people may have experienced one or more lucid dreams earlier in life but could no longer remember those events several decades later.

The same age-related decrease was found by all of the other researchers, so at least we can say this is a consistent and well-documented pattern, whatever the underlying cause(s). On gender, my two surveys showed mixed results, which is consistent with Snyder and Gackenbach's finding that gender is not a distinguishing factor in lucid dreaming frequency (although Schredl and Erlacher identified a higher proportion of female lucid dreaming in their 2004 study). I found more lucid dreaming among nonwhites than among whites, confirming Snyder and Gackenbach's findings on racial differences. My two surveys yielded mixed results on education and income, and none of the other researchers found significant results here; thus it seems

prudent for now to regard these variables as less prominent factors in the demographics of lucid dreaming.

Going beyond their results, my two surveys found a higher incidence of lucid dreaming among political liberals and libertarians, people with strong opinions pro and con regarding the Tea Party, people who rarely or never attended religious worship services, and people living in the Western region of the United States.

Once again, these differences appear against a backdrop of considerable consistency across all the groups. We do not have enough data yet to reach a definitive conclusion about the percentage of the whole human population that has had a lucid dream experience. Based on my two surveys I would estimate it to be more than 50 percent, which is consistent with the 58 percent figure that Snyder and Gackenbach offer and the 51 percent of Schredl and Erlacher's German adult sample. Among younger people, we can surely set that figure much higher, in the 70 to 80 percent range. An interesting question remains open for future study: Are younger people more likely to experience lucid dreaming simply by virtue of being young, or is this particular generation of young people more likely to experience lucid dreaming because of unique cultural influences that have emerged during this historical era?

Lucid Dreaming Content

In her chapter on "The Psychological Content of Lucid versus Nonlucid Dreams," Gackenbach employs the Hall and Van de Castle (HVDC) system of content analysis to study a large collection of lucid dream reports gathered from personal diaries, college student questionnaires, and sleep laboratory experiments. She emphasizes that the two types of dreams are not radically different in content, pointing to a broadly shared context of ordinary dreaming experience. Nevertheless, she finds sufficient evidence to note some important variations based on the analysis of independent judges. Lucid dreams have more auditory and cognitive activities, fewer characters, fewer friendly verbal social interactions, fewer happy emotions, fewer intensity modifiers, and (among the males) fewer visual activities.

This approach can be expanded and accelerated with the help of a word search template available for use with dream reports in the SDDb. The

template is grounded in the categories of the Hall and Van de Castle system, making it easy to for researchers to compare results with previous studies and extend their analyses in new directions.[11]

The SDDb includes a set of lucid dream reports as part of the Demographic Survey 2012, an online survey of 2,252 American adults in which they were asked to provide reports of three types of dreams (visitation from someone who has died, work related, and lucid awareness). Of the responses to the lucidity question ("Have you ever dreamed that you were aware of being within a dream?"), 184 female reports and 89 male reports of 25 or more words in length were selected for study. To provide a basis for comparison, these reports were matched against a set of "most recent dreams" of 25 or more words in length from 202 females and 205 males, gathered as part of the Demographic Survey 2010. Both sets of dreams were gathered from similar participants via similar methods, and their word lengths were approximately the same. This makes it feasible to compare the lucid dream and most recent dream sets with the goal of teasing out their similarities and differences.

As seen in Table 1.3, several of Gackenbach's findings are replicated in this analysis.

For both males and females, lucid dreams have higher proportions of words relating to awareness, effort, and physical aggression compared to the most recent dreams. Male lucid dreams have more flying and fantastic characters, which may indicate more bizarre content generally. The lucid dream reports were lower on many other categories of content as compared to the most recent dreams: fewer references to vision (especially for the males), color, aesthetic evaluation, nature references (especially water), family and animal characters, friendly social interactions, sexuality, and all cultural categories.

There were slightly fewer emotions reported in the lucid dreams. The males had somewhat more fear in their lucid dreams, the females somewhat less. The females had less speech in their lucid dreams. Contrary to Gackenbach's findings, both sets of dreams had very few references to auditory perceptions, so no difference between them on auditory experience can be asserted based on the present evidence.

Drawing these findings together, a picture begins to emerge of a general content profile of lucid dreaming. A good way to further develop this picture

would be to test it with two new sets of dreams, one lucid and one most recent, using nothing but these patterns of content to try and distinguish them. This would be a variation of the "blind analysis" method I have been developing to identify waking-dreaming continuities by focusing exclusively on patterns of word usage frequency, with no additional information about the dreamers' waking lives.[12] In this case I am proposing we should be able to predict that, between the two unidentified sets, the lucid dreams will have more references to awareness, effort, and physical aggression and fewer references to vision, color, aesthetic evaluation, speech (for females), nature, family and animal characters, friendly social interactions, sexuality, and all cultural categories.

The SDDb includes two sets of dreams that enable us to perform a version of this test. The lucid dreams come from a study Gackenbach and colleagues performed in 2008–2009 and shared with me in 2010. The most recent dreams come from the Hall and Van de Castle "norm dreams," which have long served as a standard of comparison with the basic patterns of ordinary dream life.[13] Gackenbach's reports drew from a sample consisting of more than 90 percent females, so they have been matched with the HVDC female norm dreams, which include a total of 490 reports from approximately 100 female college students in their late teens and early twenties from Ohio in the 1950s. The participants in the Gackenbach study were also college students in their late teens and early twenties from a school in western Canada, so this seems like a reasonably good comparison set.

Looking at the word search results in Table 1.4, the predicted differences are almost entirely confirmed.

Compared to the HVDC female norm dreams, the lucid dreams set has a much higher frequency of words relating to awareness, effort, flying, and fantastic beings, with fewer references to color, aesthetic evaluation, speech, family and animal characters, and most categories of nature (especially water) and culture. A researcher performing a blind analysis of these two sets using the content profile developed from the lucid dream reports in the Demographic Survey 2012 would have an easy time making the correct choice of which set was which.

Table 1.3 Comparing Lucid Dreams and Most Recent Dreams (MRDs)

Demographic Survey 2012		Demographic Survey 2010	
Lucid Dream Female (*N*	**Lucid Dream Male (*N* =**	**MRD Female (*N* = 202)**	**MRD Male (*N* = 205)**

	= 184)		89)					
	Percentage	**Four Most Used Words**	**Percentage**	**Four Most Used Words**	**Percentage**	**Four Most Used Words**	**Percentage**	**Four Most Used Words**
Perception								
Vision	**14.13**	see, saw, watching, watch	**5.62**	see, seeing, saw, staring	**17.82**	see, saw, seeing, watching	**14.63**	see, saw, watching, seeing
Hearing	**3.8**	heard, sound, listened, hear	**2.25**	sound, heard	**3.96**	hear, noise, hearing, heard	**2.44**	heard, hearing, loudly
Touch	**1.09**	holding, touch	**2.25**	held, holding	**3.96**	holding, hold, held, touched	**1.95**	touch, touching, touched
Smell	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0
Taste	**0.54**	bitter	**0**	0	**0.5**	bitter	**0**	0
Intensity	**14.67**	very, intense, bright, strong	**14.61**	very, overwhelming, shining	**14.85**	very, extremely, bright, intense	**20**	very, powerful, overwhelming, intensely
Chromatic color	**1.63**	yellow, orange, green	**2.25**	red	**4.46**	blue, red, green, yellow	**2.93**	blue, green, orange, red
Achromatic color	**2.17**	black, white	**0**	0	**3.96**	white, black	**1.95**	black, white, grey
Aesthetic evaluation	**4.35**	better, best, nice, good	**5.62**	good, best	**9.41**	best, good, beautiful, better	**9.27**	nice, good, beautiful, best
Emotion								
Fear	**9.78**	fear, afraid, scared, terrified	**10.11**	scared, worry, anxiety, fear	**13.86**	upset, scared, afraid, worried	**7.8**	sorry, afraid, anxiety, upset
Anger	**1.09**	irritated, angry	**1.12**	annoying, irritated	**5.94**	angry, anger, mad, annoyed	**1.95**	angry, angered, annoyed
Sadness	**0.54**	lonely	**1.12**	sadly	**0.99**	sad, unhappy	**2.44**	sad, sadness, distress, miserable
Confusion	**1.09**	confused	**2.25**	confused, amazed	**3.47**	surprise, surprised, amazed, confused	**3.41**	confused, surprised, confusing, confusion
Happiness	**3.8**	happy, relieved, glad	**1.12**	happy	**3.96**	happy	**2.93**	happy, relaxed, pleased, glad
Cognition								
Awareness	**28.8**	aware, realized,	**47.19**	aware, realized,	**10.89**	realized, noticed,	**15.12**	realized, sense, realize, notice

		realize, consciously		realize, sense		realize, realizing		
Speech	**15.76**	said, talking, speak, call	**16.85**	said, say, talk, saying	**23.27**	said, talking, talk, called	**17.07**	said, call, speaking, discussing
Imagination	**0.54**	fantasy	**0**	0	**0**	0	**2.93**	expected, expecting, expect, imagined
Planning	**2.72**	plan, intended, planning	**2.25**	planning, intended	**5.45**	planned, planning, organize, preparing	**6.83**	plan, planning, designed, design
Choice	**1.09**	decided	**3.37**	decided, approval	**4.95**	decide, decided, selected, chose	**2.93**	decided, decide, accepted
Effort	**8.7**	control, focusing, effort, contemplated	**8.99**	control, focused	**1.49**	determined, focused, effort	**1.46**	control
Reading/writing	**2.72**	book, reading, read, editing	**1.12**	written, book	**1.98**	books, writing, book	**3.9**	write, book, reading, books
Nature								
Weather	**0**	0	**0**	0	**2.97**	raining, weather, storm, snowy	**2.44**	storm, raining, sunny, stormy
Fire	**0.54**	burning	**2.25**	star, fire	**0.99**	burning, star	**4.39**	fire, stars, burning, fires
Air	**0**	0	**4.49**	air, breathe, breath	**1.98**	tornado, air, wind, blew	**3.41**	air, breathe, breath
Water	**2.72**	water, rivers, lake, snow	**1.12**	water	**10.89**	water, ocean, snow, rain	**6.34**	water, ocean, rain, sea
Earth	**2.72**	dirt, cave, mud, stone	**3.37**	landed, earth, landing, land	**3.96**	mud, soil, earth, dirt	**5.37**	earth, landing, stone, stones
Flying	**2.72**	fly, flying, flew, floating	**11.24**	flying, fly, flew	**1.98**	floating, fly, flying	**6.34**	flying, fly, flew
Falling	**4.89**	falling, fall, drop, falls	**6.74**	fell, fall	**3.47**	falling, collapse, collapsed, dropping	**5.37**	fell, dropped, falling, drop
Characters								
Family	**10.87**	brother, family, mom, parents	**6.74**	brother, family, grandmother, parents	**26.73**	mother, family, father, daughter	**20**	family, father, son, sister
Animals	**5.43**	cat, animal,	**5.62**	birds,	**12.87**	dogs, dog,	**10.24**	dog, snake,

		python, kitten		dinosaur, elephants, fish		cat, horses		dinosaur, cat
Fantastic beings	**2.17**	monster, wizard, zombie, witch	**4.49**	monster, monsters	**1.49**	zombie, spirit, ghost	**0.98**	spirit, alien
Social Interactions								
Friendliness	**8.7**	friends, friend, help, boyfriend	**8.99**	offered, married, love, helping	**35.15**	friend, friends, help, visiting	**23.9**	friends, friend, help, protect
Physical aggression	**9.78**	kill, shot, stabbed, struggling	**13.48**	kill, hit, hitting, attacked	**7.43**	shot, violent, fight, kill	**10.73**	shot, attack, war, violent
Sexuality	**0.54**	kiss	**1.12**	making love, lover	**2.48**	sexual, naked, kisses, sex	**6.34**	sex, sexual, kissed, kiss
Culture								
School	**4.89**	students, school, college, classroom	**4.49**	college, students, tested, library	**7.43**	school, college, teacher, graduation	**8.78**	school, college, students, test
Transportation	**5.98**	car, ship, bus, stair	**4.49**	car, buses, bus, stairs	**8.42**	car, boat, bus, bicycle	**16.1**	car, plane, truck, ship
Technology	**4.35**	movie, telephone, engineered, phone	**1.12**	movies	**6.44**	phone, computer, movie, radio	**7.32**	machine, phone, movie, engine
Money	**1.63**	money, business	**1.12**	buying	**6.93**	buy, business, money, sold	**6.34**	money, business, bought, buying
Christianity	**0.54**	Satan, pray, Christians	**1.12**	holy, Christians	**2.48**	church, hell, holy, heaven	**4.88**	church, Christmas, monks, nun
Death	**3.8**	died, dead, die	**3.37**	death, deceased, died	**14.36**	dead, died, deceased, death	**10.24**	dead, died, deceased, death

Note: The Lucid Dream Female set from the Demographic Survey 2012 had a total of 9,335 words, with a mean report length of 51 words and a median report length of 41 words. The Lucid Dream Male set had a total of 4,632 words, with a mean report length of 52 words and a median report length of 41 words. The MRD Female set from the Demographic Survey 2010 had a total of 12,373 words, with a mean report length of 61 words and a median report length of 49 words. The MRD Male set had a total of 12,799 words, with a mean report length of 62 words and a median report length of 43 words.

Table 1.4 Comparing Lucid Dreams and Female Norm Dreams

	Lucid Dreams 2010 (*N* = 173)		**Female Norm Dreams (*N* = 490)**	
	Percentage	**Four Most Used Words**	**Percentage**	**Four Most Used Words**
Perception				

Vision	**22.54**	see, saw, seeing, watching	**47.35**	see, saw, watching, seeing
Hearing	**7.51**	hear, noise, heard, sound	**12.86**	heard, hear, noise, loud
Touch	**3.47**	holding, hold, held, touch	**7.76**	held, holding, hold, touch
Smell	**0.58**	smell	**0.41**	smelled, smell
Taste	**0**	0	**1.22**	taste, sweet, delicious
Intensity	**26.59**	very, strong, intense, bright	**47.55**	very, bright, extremely, shining
Chromatic color	**4.62**	blue, red, green, yellow	**17.35**	red, green, blue, yellow
Achromatic color	**2.89**	white, black	**11.43**	white, black, gray
Aesthetic evaluation	**10.98**	best, good, nice, cute	**21.63**	good, beautiful, nice, best
Emotion				
Fear	**30.06**	scared, afraid, fear, anxiety	**28.16**	afraid, frightened, worried, upset
Anger	**9.25**	angry, mad, anger, irritated	**10**	angry, disgusted, mad, furious
Sadness	**2.89**	sad, sadness	**5.1**	sad, lonely, disappointed, unhappy
Confusion	**2.31**	confused, confusion, surprise	**11.02**	surprised, confused, surprise, puzzled
Happiness	**9.83**	happy, relieved, relaxed	**10.82**	happy, relieved, pleased, glad
Cognition				
Awareness	**63.58**	realized, aware, realize, noticed	**18.78**	noticed, realized, aware, conscious
Speech	**26.01**	talking, said, talk, speak	**45.92**	said, talking, called, call
Imagination	**2.31**	imagining, envision, imagination, pretend	**3.47**	expected, expecting, pretended, awaiting
Planning	**3.47**	arranged, organized, arranging, planned	**5.31**	planning, planned, design, plans
Choice	**10.98**	decided, choose, decide, judging	**11.84**	decided, decide, accepted, deciding
Effort	**15.03**	control, contemplating, concentrated, determined	**1.22**	determined, control, focusing, effort

Reading/writing	**3.47**	writing, sentence, books, written	**6.94**	books, read, letter, writing
Nature				
Weather	**1.16**	raining, storm, snowy, lightning	**3.47**	storm, raining, weather, stormed
Fire	**3.47**	star, fire, lava	**3.27**	sun, fire, burning, star
Air	**2.89**	air, tornado, windy	**3.27**	air, breath, windy, wind
Water	**6.36**	water, lake, river, pond	**17.14**	water, lake, river, snow
Earth	**4.62**	diamonds, earth, dirt, landed	**9.59**	dirty, land, stone, dirt
Flying	**8.67**	fly, flying, flew, floating	**2.45**	fly, flying, floating, flew
Falling	**7.51**	fall, falling, fell	**7.14**	fell, falling, drop, dropped
Characters				
Family	**22.54**	family, parents, mom, dad	**39.18**	mother, father, sister, parents
Animals	**8.09**	bear, cat, bird, dogs	**11.22**	cat, dog, animals, horses
Fantastic beings	**3.47**	monster, vampires, witches, witch	**0.61**	witch, spirit, fairy
Social Interactions				
Friendliness	**45.66**	friends, boyfriend, friend, party	**51.02**	friend, friends, boyfriend, married
Physical aggression	**22.54**	hit, fighting, killed, kill	**15.51**	hit, fight, shot, kill
Sexuality	**4.62**	sexual, sex, arousal, having sex	**3.47**	intercourse, kiss, sex, kissed
Culture				
School	**14.45**	school, college, test, teacher	**24.29**	school, teacher, college, student
Transportation	**15.03**	car, stairs, truck, airplane	**27.14**	car, stairs, bus, boat
Technology	**11.56**	movie, video, computer, machine	**8.57**	telephone, movie, phone, radio
Money	**1.73**	money, purchased, rich	**8.78**	money, bought, buy, selling
Christianity	**1.73**	hell, god, Christmas, heaven	**4.49**	church, Christmas, religious, altar

Death	**8.67**	dead, died, die, death	**7.35**	dead, died, die, death

Note: The Lucid Dreams 2010 set had a total of 19,562 words, with a mean report length of 113 words and a median report length of 91 words. The Female Norm Dreams set had a total of 32,042 words, with a mean report length of 138 words and a median report length of 130 words.

There are slightly fewer friendly social interactions in the lucid dreams, slightly more sexuality references, and about the same emotions as in the norm dreams. These categories may not be as vital to the content profile of lucid dreams as the other ones; only future studies can determine that.

Of course, each individual dream has its own unique constellation of content. Some lucid dreams, for example, are filled with visual perceptions, family characters, and water references. One of the benefits of developing large-scale content profiles is the ability to identify more precisely what makes certain dreams especially unusual and distinctive. The long-term goal is to determine the parameters of what is *ordinary* so we can better understand the novel dimensions of what is *extra*ordinary.

Conclusion

This chapter offers new empirical data to answer the central questions of how often people experience lucid dreams and which patterns characterize their content. The findings should not, however, be taken as fixed and settled truths. Instead, they are best regarded as working hypotheses to be tested, corrected, and refined in future studies.

Even so, we have enough data to put the burden of proof squarely on those who would deny that lucid dreaming is a widespread public phenomenon (lucid *awareness* much more so than lucid *control*). The two surveys discussed here, in combination with the findings of other researchers, make it clear that people from all across the demographic spectrum have experienced lucid dreaming, with at least 50 percent of the general population having had such an experience. The data also make it clear that younger people are much more likely than older people to experience lucid dreaming.

In terms of content, we have sufficient evidence to reject the idea that lucid dreams are radically different from nonlucid dreams. On most categories of content, their frequencies are fairly close to each other. It may

be best, then, to regard lucid dreaming not as a separate type of dream, but rather as a particular constellation of content features within the general framework of dreaming as a whole. Foremost among these content features is a much higher proportion of references to awareness and effort. This could serve as a potentially useful hypothesis to test in future research: The higher the frequency of awareness- and effort-related words, the more likely a given set of dreams is to have instances of lucidity. Another hypothesis worth pursuing is the relatively low frequency of vision-related words in lucid dreams (possibly related to the correlation Gackenbach found between lucid dreaming frequency and nonvisual spatial skills). This, too, may be a feature of content that could reliably distinguish sets of lucid and nonlucid dreams. The research covered here suggests lucid dreams are somewhat more likely to include "bizarre" content like flying and fantastic beings than nonlucid dreams, adding weight to the idea that lucidity can be triggered by, or lead to, encounters with strange or anomalous phenomena.

A chapter like this is destined to become a relic, overtaken in time by new studies employing bigger data sets and better analytic tools. The findings presented here represent a status report on current research and present-day knowledge: *This is how far we have gotten*. My hope is that future investigators will draw guidance and inspiration from this material so they can move beyond it and make new discoveries of their own that improve public understanding of self-awareness in dreaming.

Notes

1. Jayne Gackenbach, "The Psychological Content of Lucid versus Nonlucid Dreams," in *Conscious Mind, Sleeping Brain: Perspectives on Lucid Dreaming*, ed. Jayne Gackenbach and Stephen LaBerge (New York: Plenum, 1988), 181–220; Thomas Snyder and Jayne Gackenbach, "Individual Differences Associated with Lucid Dreaming," in *Conscious Mind, Sleeping Brain: Perspectives on Lucid Dreaming*, ed. Jayne Gackenbach and Stephen LaBerge (New York: Plenum, 1988), 221–259.
2. R. Stepansky, B. Holzinger, A. Schmeiser-Rieder, B. Saletu, M. Kunze, and J. Zeitlhof, "Austrian Dream Behavior: Results of a Representative Population Survey," *Dreaming* 8 (1998): 23–30.
3. Michael Schredl and Daniel Erlacher, "Lucid Dreaming Frequency and Personality," *Personality and Individual Differences* 37 (2004): 1463–1473.
4. Michael Schredl and Daniel Erlacher, "Frequency of Lucid Dreaming in a Representative German Sample," *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 112 (2011): 104–108.
5. Daniel Erlacher, Michael Schredl, Tsuneo Watanabe, Jun Yaman, and Florian Gantzert, "The

Incidence of Lucid Dreaming within a Japanese University Student Sample," *International Journal of Dream Research* 1, no. 2 (2008): 39–43.

6. http://sleepanddreamdatabase.org.
7. Snyder and Gackenbach, 230.
8. Ibid., 244.
9. Stepansky et al., 29.
10. Erlacher et al., 2008, 42.
11. The 40 categories used in this chapter represent the 1.0 template of the SDDb. Since the publication of this book, a revised 2.0 template has been developed and added to the website. However, the 1.0 template remains accessible, so researchers can always directly access the original analytic data presented in this chapter.
12. Kelly Bulkeley, "Dreaming in Adolescence: A "Blind" Word Search of a Teenage Girl's Dream Series," *Dreaming* 22, no. 4 (2012): 240-252.
13. Calvin Hall and Robert Van de Castle, *The Content Analysis of Dreams* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1966); G. William Domhoff, *Finding Meaning in Dreams: A Quantitative Approach* (New York: Plenum, 1996).

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2

A Neurobiological Model of Lucid Dreaming

Ursula Voss

Georg Voss

Lucid dreaming is a complex and difficult topic to investigate scientifically. It has many merits, but also many hazards we should always keep in mind. For one, lucid dreaming has developed into a generic term for many dreamlike phenomena that should, in our view, not be mingled together. A fantasy, for example, occurring in the context of hypnagogic hallucinations occurs out of waking or during the transition from the wake state to the sleep state, usually at the beginning of the night. A return to the wake state is in most cases easily accomplished. By contrast, a lucid dream, as we define it, arises out of rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, and the sleeper remains in this state, not always being able to wake up. The fact that these two very different types of dreams are often confounded, not only by potential participants in our studies but also by many researchers, can lead to much confusion with respect to the interpretation of results. The immense differences in the reported incidence rates of lucid dreams in adults are just one of many examples in which we arrive at invalid estimates due to insufficient state differentiation. As our research over the past years has documented, hypnagogic dreams are frequently reported by adults, whereas lucid dreams occurring out of REM sleep are mainly experienced by children and adolescents.

Another problem arises out of the fact that we are dependent on valid dream reports. Especially in the study of lucid dreams, we should be careful not to underestimate the power of social desirability. Lucid dreamers who agree to take part in a laboratory study usually have high intrinsic motivation that makes them—and us—easy victims of socially desirable answers and reports. We should, therefore, strive to control for suggestibility and social desirability effects in our subjects and, if at all possible, conduct our studies

using a double-blind design.

In this chapter, we seek to embed what we have learned about lucid dreaming into a larger model on states of arousal and conscious awareness. We have tried to remain critical, although, of course, the research of lucid dreaming is apt to inspire enthusiasm.

Lucid Dreaming and the Scientific Study of Consciousness

We regard consciousness as a state-space continuum in which *states* of arousal such as waking, sleep, or coma determine the level of awareness and interactive abilities with the external world. Each definable state occupies a certain *space* in the continuum—that is, each state possesses a limited degree of variability. The idea of distinct *modes* of consciousness operating in these spaces helps to define space functions and space borders. What is the difference, for example, between a daydream and an REM sleep dream? Is state variability a necessary prerequisite for reflective thought or higher-order (secondary) consciousness? If so, which degree of variability is necessary to allow reflective thought or higher-order (secondary) consciousness? Waking may be filled with a high degree of alertness, allowing intense interactional processes, or it may be filled with daydreams. In either case, however, the person occupying the wake space has access to functions of secondary consciousness. By contrast, rapid eye movement sleep is primary, whether it is accompanied by highly bizarre and puzzling dreams or by structured and easily interpretable ones. Whereas functions of secondary consciousness include reflective thought or projective thinking about the past and the future, the most striking feature of primary consciousness is that it is restricted to the present—that "time" has no meaning.

Our research on lucid dreaming aims at identifying space "borders" by stretching space variability until the state of REM sleep destabilizes and turns into a hybrid without inducing a complete change of state. This research is intriguing because it allows us to look at the brain while it changes from merely a primary mode of consciousness to a reduced form of secondary consciousness. The study of lucid dreaming enables us to look at physiological correlates of these modes and to arrive at testable hypotheses

about their functionality.

In the following sections, we will describe our work on lucid dreams, lay out our current working hypotheses, and sketch out future work. Although our approach has so far been mostly phenomenological, we will outline a mechanistic model of consciousness as we currently understand it. Our model rests upon major advances in the understanding of clinical and nonclinical conditions of neurologically recognized altered states and integrates our own findings on lucid dreams.[1]

Dream Consciousness

Dreams are altered states of consciousness in which the brain constructs a virtual world of vivid images that we are unable to identify as hallucinogenic. The dream's surrealistic nature goes unnoticed despite its utterly bizarre and inconsistent elements. Due to an attenuated activation of the prefrontal cortex during rapid eye movement sleep, the dreamer is robbed of his ability to think logically or to make meaningful decisions. Yet he feels as if he exploited his mental resources, and he is intensively engaged in the process of experiencing the dream. The dream feels real. Most likely, the reason for this delusion is the fact that dreams occur in the primary mode of consciousness, a distinct space in the consciousness continuum (Figure 2.1). Primary consciousness is characterized by a fusion of past, present, and future. It is governed by what is immediately present. Upon awakening, the sleeper enters the secondary mode, which enables him to plan ahead, to reflect on his past, and to contemplate his future.

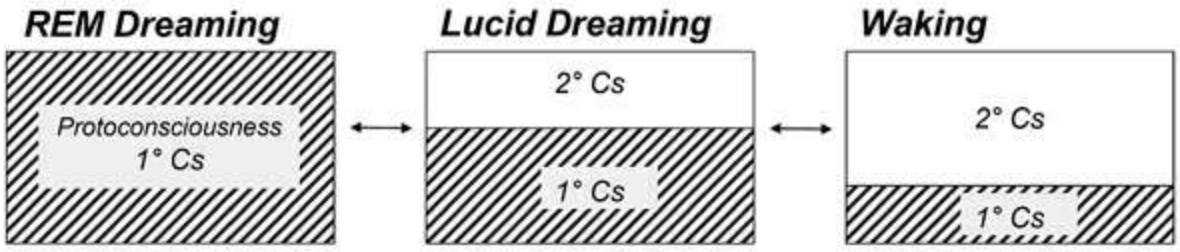

Figure 2.1.

Bimodal model of consciousness:[2] 1° Cs: primary consciousness; 2° Cs: secondary consciousness.

Lucid Dreams as Hybrid States of Consciousness

We consider lucid dreaming as *hybrid* because thinking is only partly ruled by lower-level consciousness. To some extent, the dreamer has—however limited—access to higher-order consciousness, enabling him to reflect on his present state. The dream is still a dream, but the person is able to distance himself from the ongoing imagery and may even be successful in attenuating its emotional impact.

On a phenomenological level, the dreamer is aware of the fact that he is dreaming while the dream continues. In our work, we refer to lucid dreams as those and only those dreams that arise out of REM sleep. We are aware of other notations but have chosen to be so restrictive so as to be able to arrive at reliable predictions and conclusions regarding the state-space model. In our research, we have been able to document the maintenance of sleep during lucid dreaming. It is our understanding that lucid dreaming alters REM sleep without surpassing it: while REM sleep atonia is unchanged, as evidenced by EMG traces, and while rapid eye movement bursts (REMs) continue as in REM sleep, the EEG frequency spectrum is significantly changed.[3] Normally, REM sleep dreams are accompanied by strongly attenuated activation and synchronicity in the gamma frequency band, especially in frontal parts of the brain, suggestive of reduced conscious awareness and executive ego functions.[4] By contrast, we observe a strong increase in gamma band activity in lucid dreaming. All lower frequencies remain unchanged, supporting the notion that sleep—and even REM sleep—is, indeed, maintained. We must assume, however, that lucid dreams occur very close to the inner boundary of the state of REM sleep and that it is a fragile, destabilized hybrid state (Figure 2.2). On a subjective level, participants in our studies have acknowledged this observation by stating that it takes effort to dream lucidly and that such dreams are easily interrupted by noise or state of mind.

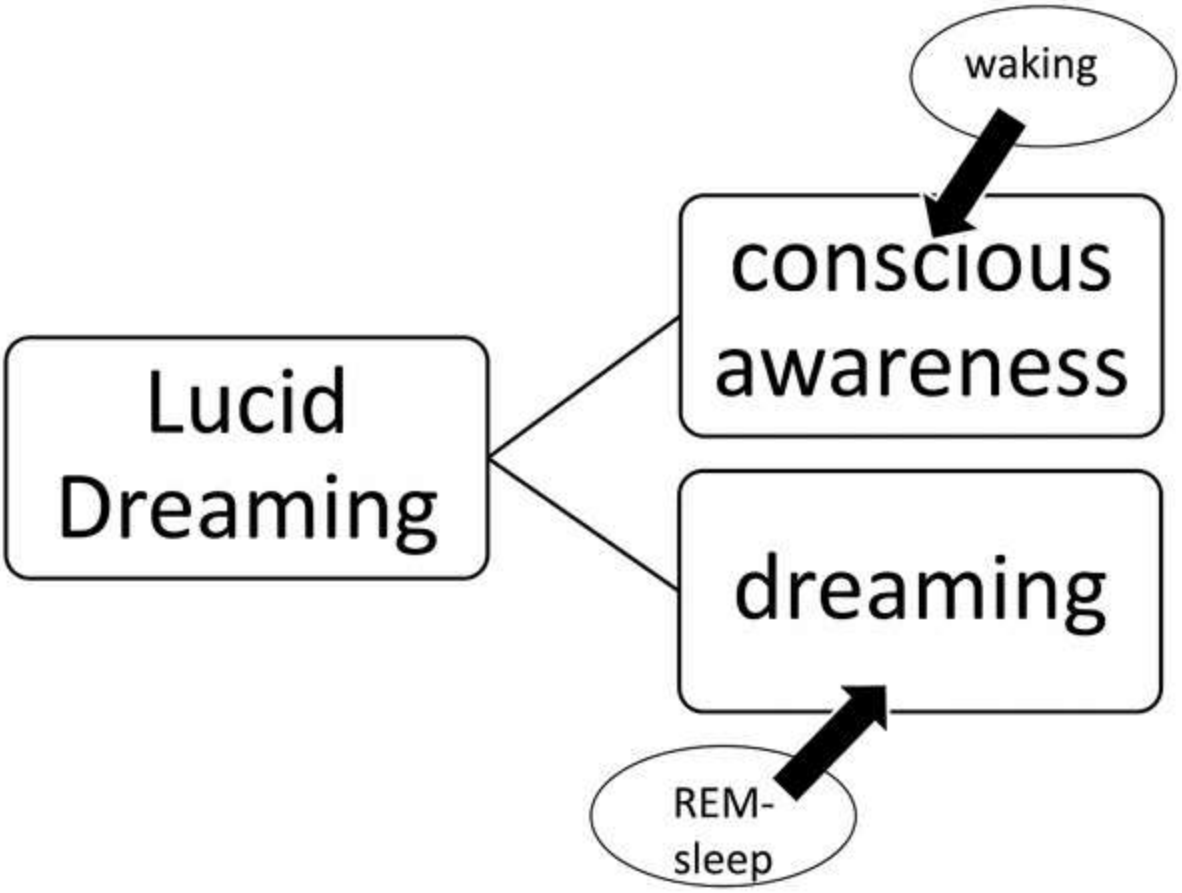

Figure 2.2.
Lucid dreaming as a hybrid state with elements of the wake state and the state of REM sleep.

Following are two subjects' reports, from a 30-year-old woman and a 27-year-old woman, respectively, on the experience of achieving lucidity in dreams:

> Report 1: To me, being lucid is always a very exciting incident . . . In this state it feels like a struggle in my brain between keeping the dream-scenery and waking. In these short periods of lucidity the awareness of the acting dream body and the real body in bed exist simultaneously and it costs a lot of concentration to keep the balance between both.
>
> Report 2: It is not easy to become or to stay lucid while dreaming. Lucidity is fragile and it is in fact all about maintaining a proper balance between control and looseness.[5]

Differences between Normal REM Sleep Dreams and Lucid Dreams: The Lucidity and Consciousness

in Dreams Scale

The core criterion for lucid dreams is insight into the fact that one is dreaming while the dream continues. However, control over the dream plot, access to waking memory, and logical thought have also been claimed as key factors in lucid dreaming.[6] In lieu of a proper instrument to measure consciousness subjectively, we have developed an analytically derived factor called the Lucidity and Consciousness in Dreams (LuCiD) scale.[7] An interdisciplinary team of philosophers, psychiatrists, and psychologists constructed the theory-based items of the scale. Results are based on more than 300 nonlucid and lucid dreams, verified by reports following forced REM-sleep awakenings in the laboratory. The scale was tested and validated through extensive factor analytic procedures, resulting in eight factors clearly relevant in dream consciousness; our research questions concern the defining properties of these distinct substates within the state of sleep. Which cognitive functions can our brain access in normal (nonlucid) dreaming? Do lucid dreams differ measurably from nonlucid dreams and if so, how much and in which respects?

Our analyses identified eight factors involved in dream consciousness. While it is possible that our initial item pool did not exhaust all theoretically possible elements, we consider these results a first step in the search for an empirical definition of consciousness in dreams. According to the performed factor analyses, dream consciousness can best be described through the following factors: (1) *insight*, (2) *realism*, (3) *control*, (4) *memory*, (5) *thought*, (6) *positive emotion*, (7) *negative emotion*, and (8) *dissociation*. When we interpret mean scores, we must distinguish between absolute values and differences between lucid and nonlucid dreams. We consider a mean score for a given factor as high in absolute terms when it lies above the scale mean (2.5).

According to our analyses, nonlucid or "normal" dreams are characterized by low absolute values in all factors except *realism*. They seem to almost completely lack *insight*, *control*, and *dissociation*. Although mean scores for *thought* are higher than those for *memory*, both are—in absolute terms—not pronounced. Results also show relatively low mean values for *negative emotion*. However, our sample was not representative for the general population and quite homogeneous in age distribution. Furthermore, most of

the data were collected in a laboratory setting, a factor that is known to increase positive emotionality in dream imagery.[8]

Lucid dreams differ from nonlucid ones in six of the eight factors identified in the LuCiD scale. The leading factor in lucid dreams is obviously *insight*, followed by *thought*, *control*, *positive emotion*, and *dissociation*.

With regard to the distinction between primary and secondary consciousness in dreams, this means that *insight* as a defining feature of lucidity and core aspect of secondary consciousness is related to the emergence of other features of secondary consciousness—namely, being able to reflect not only upon the fact that one is currently dreaming, but more generally upon the unfolding dream events. The relationship between *insight* and *control* is equally clear, as realizing that one is dreaming is an important condition for trying to control not only one's own behavior in the dream, but also the dream itself. It must be pointed out, though, that *control* is much more seldom achieved than lucid *insight*, as evidenced by the low covariance of this factor suggestive of a floor effect.[9] Despite this limitation, lucidity seems to be characterized not only by lucid insight, but also by *insight*, which facilitates the emergence of other aspects of secondary consciousness in dreams. Similarly, while our study found nonlucid dreams to lack *insight*, *control*, and *dissociation* almost completely; *thought*, though significantly less frequent than in lucid dreams, was not completely absent in nonlucid dreams.

Another important finding of our study was that lucid and nonlucid dreams were not distinguished by the factor sense of *realism*. Whereas we had previously thought it represented lack of bizarreness, further explorations suggest that this factor describes the degree by which the dream feels real.[10] Lucid dreams feel as realistic as nonlucid dreams. A question we are currently not able to answer is whether both dream types feel equally bizarre.

This finding stands in apparent contrast to reports from other authors who found that the onset of lucidity is often accompanied by a change in the overall experiential quality of the dream, noting that lucid dreams are often described as taking on a surreal, dreamlike quality.[11] At present, we are inclined to think that perhaps the different perceptions may be related to the already mentioned confounding of wake- and sleep-induced lucid experiences. For lucid dreams arising out of REM sleep, lucid insight is apparently not accompanied by a change in the subjectively experienced

realism of the dream.

Puberty and the Onset of Frontal Lobe Integration

We know that the spontaneous occurrence of lucid dreaming is especially frequent during puberty, a time in which we experience the final stages of frontal lobe myelination, and a time of synapse expansion and dendritic growth.[12] These neurobiological changes provide the prerequisites for the integration of the frontal lobes into the corticocortical and corticothalamic networks.[13] Lucid dreaming, therefore, may occur naturally during the final stages of frontal lobe integration, a process similar to an update of computer hardware. It seems to us most likely that the peak in spontaneous dream lucidity in puberty is nothing but an accidental confounding of conscious states during a time of high cerebral diversification. An intriguing finding is that lucid dreaming and, through it, dissociation of mind can be trained. Interestingly, dissociative phenomena such as derealization and depersonalization can also easily be trained in the laboratory during this same period in ontogenetic development.[14]

The Gamma Band Hypothesis

In our study of EEG tracings during lucid dreaming, the most striking finding was that lucidity was accompanied by an increased activation of the frontal lobes of the brain. This applies both to synchronicity and to consciousness-related frequencies (around 40 Hz). This observation has led us to propose a "gamma band hypothesis," suggesting that brain activation in the 40 Hz frequency range is related to secondary or higher-order consciousness.[15] We have, in a recent study, investigated this hypothesis by frontotemporal application of weak electrical currents in the frequency of 40 Hz versus 2 Hz and sham (no current flow).[16] The study was aimed at testing for causality of 40 Hz activity in the generation of secondary consciousness in dreams. If activity centered around 40 Hz was causally related to secondary consciousness as expressed in lucid dreaming, then the application of 40 Hz

should induce lucid dreaming, provided that it is possible to change brain function in a frequency-specific way through mild electrical stimulation.

Our results suggest that it is, indeed, possible to change brain activation in a frequency-specific way. Moreover, the induced change in brain activity was obviously potent enough to alter conscious awareness in the dream.

In our study, 40 Hz stimulation increased activity in the gamma frequency band and added elements of secondary consciousness to dreams. The most striking finding was that subjects reported to "see myself from the outside" and to "watch the dream from the outside as if it was displayed on a screen." These items belong to the factor *dissociation*. Apparently, our subjects took on a third-person perspective following 40 Hz stimulation. Interestingly, the increase in gamma activity was not restricted to 40 Hz, but rather extended to the respective band of frequencies, ranging from 35 to 65 Hz.

Stimulation with 2 Hz or sham showed no such effects. By contrast, 2 Hz stimulation often interrupted REM sleep, a finding that remains difficult to understand. Possibly, enhancing slow-wave activity in REM sleep is incompatible with this sleep state and destabilizes it.

Results from 40 Hz induction studies support the gamma band hypothesis, although we are still cautious about extending it to other frequencies. At this time, we think it possible that other frequencies (e.g., in the beta band) may trigger gamma activity and lucid dreaming in REM sleep. As often the case in science, answering one question generates several others. We will continue to search for answers and also look forward to the extension of our studies by other laboratories.

The Space of Consciousness: A Neurophenomenological Model

To review, in our model, we define consciousness as a *space* occupied by *states* that vary as a function of sensing, judging, and motor control. This is only an approximation, of course, but we hope it will prove useful in the generation and testing of specific hypotheses. Note that we do not attempt to differentiate between internal and external sources of information or state-

dependent neurochemical modulations, such as laid out in Allan Hobson and Robert McCarthy's AIM model.[17] Our space-state model is exclusively phenomenological. The main questions it addresses center on state boundaries and within-state variability.

We model consciousness as a three-dimensional space, with a horizontal dimension visualizing the level of sensual perception and a vertical dimension we will identify with the level of higher cognitive functions. A third dimension called "motor control" denotes the degree to which an organism is capable of voluntary movement. Note that the terms "sensing" and "judging" were first introduced by Carl G. Jung and later by Isabel Briggs Myers in their quest to categorize different personality types.[18] Here, we use these terms as quantitative dimensions that can exist independent of each other and that allow us maximal dispersion of space. "Sensing" refers to the ability to experience physical and mental fluctuations, whereas "judging" is meant to describe varying degrees of higher-order cognitive capacities such as reflective awareness including the ability to dissociate, thinking about the past and contemplating the future, and decision making. The motor control dimension was introduced to allow for enough space to position different types of unresponsive states such as coma (low motor control, low sensing, and low judging) and, for example, locked-in-syndrome, which would be low in motor control but high in sensing and high in judging (see also Table 2.1). Our model is even broad enough to include artificial intelligence (e.g., high judging and low sensing) and to span all forms of animal life.[19] However, for now, we want to restrict our argument to human consciousness.

The *space* is divided into subspaces or stripes, corresponding to *states* of arousal such as waking, sleep, or coma (Figure 2.3). These *states* largely determine the ability to interact with the external world. The judging dimension visualizes the level of control over mind. We can think of this total *space* as originating at the near-death *state* on the lower left of Figure 2.3, spanning over several stages of sleep and wakefulness to some ultimate wake-state at the upper right.

Each definable state, occupying some room within the consciousness space, can be described by a finite number of attributes, and each state possesses a limited degree of variability. Within the wakefulness area are, for example, daydreams, meditation, and focused attention on either internal or external information. Regarding lucid dreams, we assume that the so-called

wake-initiated lucid dreams (WILD) are substates within the wake state, whereas REM-sleep induced lucid dreams belong to the sleep state.

Table 2.1 Examples of Placements in the SoC

	Motor Control	**Sensing**	**Judging**
Near-death	↓	?	?
Coma	↓	↓	↓
Minimally conscious state	↓	(↓)	↓
Locked-in-syndrome	↓	↑	↑
Light sleep	↓	(↓)	(↓)
Slow-wave sleep	↓	↓	↓
REM sleep	↓	↑	↓
REM lucid dreaming	↓	↑	(↑)
WILD	(↑)	↑	↑
Daydreaming	↑	↑	↑

↑ present, ↓ strongly attenuated, (↑) present to a limited degree, (↓) more absent than present, ?: not clearly determinable.

Regarding the third dimension, motor control, for states of unresponsiveness, spanning over coma to light sleep, the corresponding motor control values are very low, so one might think of our model as two-dimensional for these conditions.[20] During the state of wakefulness, however, motor control becomes a significant dimension because it allows us to differentiate between near-death, coma, minimally conscious state, and locked-in syndrome, to give some examples.

The idea of distinct states of consciousness operating in an overall space allows us to define borders between these states and transition functions describing the switch from one state to another. At this time, we leave open the question of whether this *space* of *consciousness* (SoC) is a continuum or whether it is discrete, perhaps even finite. This assumption is equivalent to the question of how many states exist and how smoothly the transition between states takes place. Nevertheless, we expect that the number of possible states will turn out to be rather limited, although more states may exist than those that have so far been identified.

We have to admit that this model may not be valid in the area of near-

death, because some phenomena might exist that form a singularity within the SoC.[21] That is, these phenomena may not be accurately described by a further decrease in sensing and judging compared to the unresponsiveness area, but instead may turn out to be accompanied by an increase in some of these activities. This is important because the model and its corresponding theory do not aim to define criteria for the declaration of clinical death.

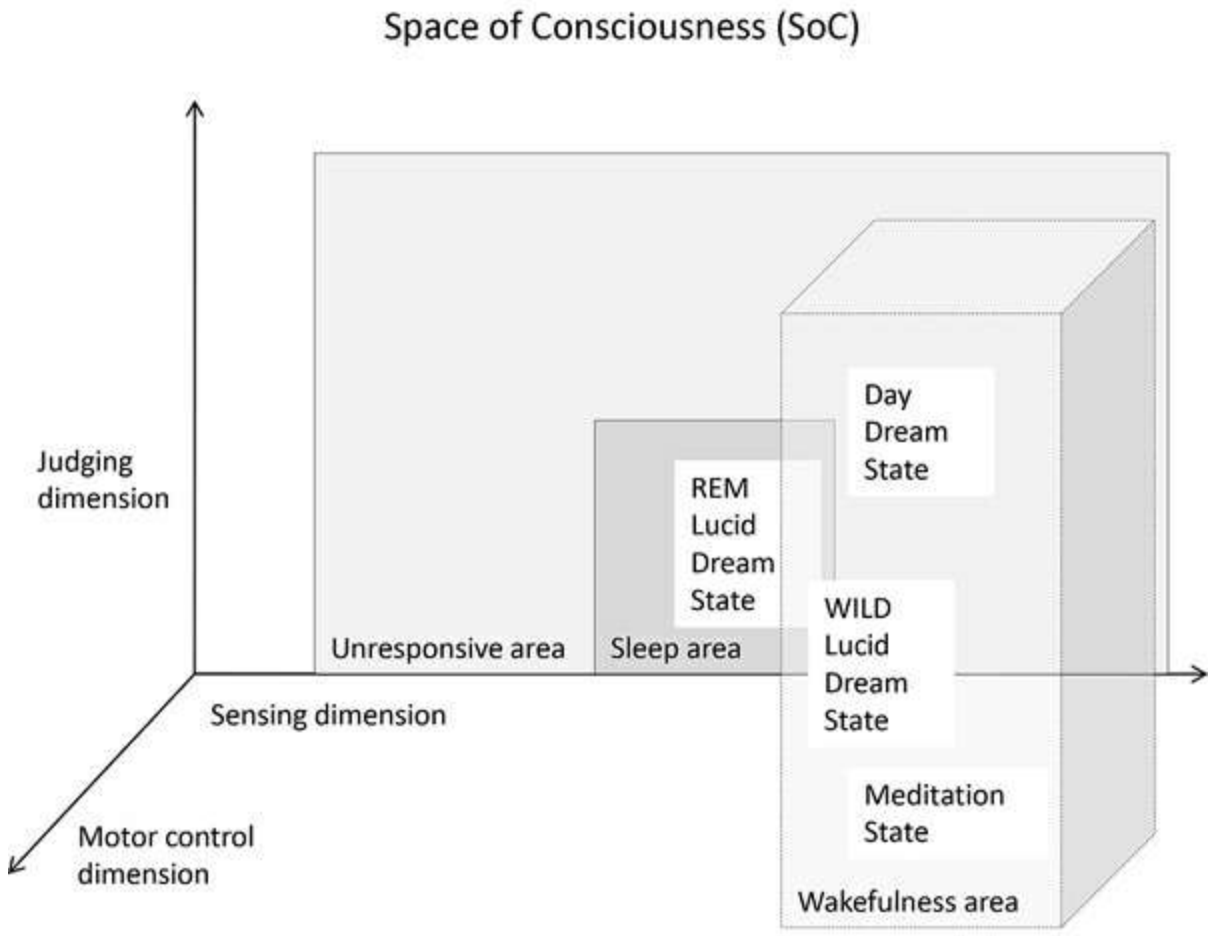

Figure 2.3.
Space of consciousness (SoC) model.

In all other cases within this model, we can discuss the difference—for example, between a daydream and an REM sleep dream—representing two different states and two different rectangles in our SoC. Some questions directly derived from the model view are as follows:

- How many states can be separated—that is, how many states are

represented by rectangles in the SoC?

- Which kinds of states cover a broader part of the space, incorporating some states of minor extent and thus defining subspaces of their own within the total of SoC? A clear candidate is wakefulness, covering a range including daydreams, concentration, and hyperarousal. Another is sleep, providing a lesser but nonetheless wide range of substates such as light sleep, slow-wave sleep, REM sleep (both phasic and tonic), and lucid dreaming.
- What are the conditions that allow transitions from one state into another?

Another question of high relevance is whether some state is a necessary prerequisite for reflective thought or higher-order (secondary) consciousness. If so, what degrees of variability within this state or how many substates are necessary to allow reflective thought or higher-order (secondary) consciousness? Waking may be filled with a high degree of alertness, allowing intense interactional processes, or it may be filled with daydreams. In either case, the person occupying the wake subspace has access to functions of secondary consciousness. By contrast, rapid eye movement sleep is characterized by reduced conscious awareness (primary), whether it is accompanied by highly bizarre and puzzling dreams or by structured and easily interpretable ones. Whereas functions of secondary consciousness include reflective thought or projective thinking about the past and the future, the most striking feature of primary consciousness is that it is restricted to the present—in other words, that "time" has no meaning.

Our research on lucid dreaming aims at identifying state borders by stretching state variability until the state of REM sleep destabilizes and borders on waking without inducing a complete change of state. This research is intriguing because it allows us to look at the brain while it changes from a merely primary mode of consciousness to a reduced form of secondary consciousness. The study of lucid dreaming enables us to look at physiological correlates of these modes and to arrive at testable hypotheses about their functionality. Even more, by abutting state boundaries, we hope to be able to determine the limits of state capacities.

Beyond basic scientific progress, we hope, of course, that our work will contribute to a better understanding of altered conscious states and the

implementation of our methods in clinical applications. This concerns, for example, comatose or locked-in patients who are, through their trauma, confined to a particular state and who may benefit from the possibility of maximally utilizing state capacities to improve quality of life.

Notes

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3

Lucid Dreaming in Psychotherapy

Brigitte Holzinger

When I first heard about lucid dreaming in 1986 in my Gestalt therapy training in Germany, I was immediately taken by this fascinating topic. I could hardly believe that it was possible to enter a dream. I thought, assuming that dreaming is the "royal road to the unconscious," as Freud said, then it must be possible to influence our psychological structure and therefore overcome our problems or shortcomings via lucid dreaming.

This "outrageous" topic was then called *klarträumen*—which translates literally as "clear dreaming"—Paul Tholey, the German pioneer of lucidity, coined this term. At the time, Tholey belonged to the German epistemological group of Gestalt psychologists, the GTA, the Society for Gestalt Theory and Its Applications, founded in 1978. Under the umbrella of the GTA, I was trained as a Gestalt-oriented psychotherapist. Gestalt theory and Gestalt therapy were and are my background for research and for psychotherapy.

Paul Tholey was well respected among his peers, even though he was a little "odd." He was always loosely dressed, would look or stare at a point when talking to you, and would agree to give talks and then not show up. As a man in his fifties, he would ride in a handstand downhill on his skateboard, sit on hot stoves, and would hurt himself frequently and then leave the hospital earlier than advisable. Yet he filled lecture halls when he showed up with what he had discovered: the *klartraum*. We owe him the most detailed description of lucid dreaming and some of the most detailed reports on self-experiments with lucid dreaming.[1]

In 1987, Paul Tholey, along with his co-author Kaleb Utecht, described seven original criteria for lucid dreaming.[2] Here I have reframed them under the light of Gestalt terminology according to my own experience in *klarträumen* or lucid dreaming to describe its potential:

1. Awareness of (spatial) orientation
2. Awareness of the capacity of choice/deciding/expectation/of being in charge
3. Awareness of memory
4. Awareness of identity —the "I" without which there would be no dialogue
5. Awareness of the dreaming environment
6. Awareness of the meaning of the dream
7. Awareness of (intense) concentration—a state of "flow"

As far as I am concerned, the definition of lucid dreaming is still an ongoing project, as different aspects of consciousness are involved, each having different effects on the subjective experience of lucid dreaming. In my understanding of the state, at its most basic level a lucid dream is a dream in which we are aware of the state and are aware of our ability to make choices (Tholey's points 2 and 5). The five other dimensions of awareness I consider lucid potential. They can be present in a lucid dream, but do not make the dream lucid if they appear on their own. What makes a dream a lucid experience are the first two criteria occurring in tandem.

I will spare the reader discussion of other definitions of lucid dreaming, although a thorough consideration of this topic can be found in the 2011 work of Kahan and LaBerge.[3] However, I recommend that we should start to find a proper definition as new techniques for assessing brain activation are developing. Some of my colleagues even claim that they have found brain correlates of lucid dreaming under functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) conditions, but we cannot be sure of what was actually investigated due to the vagaries of current definitions and descriptions and how they relate to functions of orientation, memory, consciousness, cognition, and so on. We have to become more differentiated when it comes to defining dream states. Who would have thought that there might be something like a *lucid nightmare* 10 years ago?[4]

To reiterate, in my opinion just knowing that one is dreaming in a dream makes no difference necessarily between the content and experience of a dream and a lucid dream. However, for research sake, having this distinction makes the life of a brain researcher much easier because having a full lucid dream as described previously in a positron emission tomography (PET)

scanner or an fMRI tube is impossible today. Also, acknowledging a more nuanced criteria for lucid dreaming makes my life as a clinical researcher much easier, because in our nightmare projects almost half the participants reported dreams with some knowledge of the dream environment, but only a few were able to report a full lucid dream: not too surprising, considering that the patients suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) were also heavily medicated.

I claim that a fully realized lucid dream is an altered state of consciousness—one of the best, I might add—and is related to the trance state or, speaking in Buddhist terms, to (spontaneous) enlightenment. Namkhai Norbu, a Rinpoche of the Dzogchen line in Tibetan Buddhism, which emphasizes the practice of lucid dreaming as a spiritual discipline, described the view of Tibetan Buddhism on dreaming and lucid dreaming in a verbal interview during the symposium Dreaming and Consciousness in 1998:

> In Dzog-Chen teaching we consider dream[ing] could be . . . part of the path, because [the] dream is something related with our existence, but it is the speech of mind. For example, when we are using [a] dream in a practice, then [the] dream can be [full of] awareness. That means we know already [that we are] dreaming during . . . dreaming. . . . [A]lso sometimes when we have some bad dreams we can change [the] dream; we can guide [the] dream. We couldn't create the dream, some kind of history or something like this, because [the] dream is always appearing with our circumstance. How is our circumstance, how is our nature of energy, condition, et cetera? For that reason, then, [the] dream represents also something like [a] reflection of our life and everything. When we then have [a] dream of clarity, that means then, [this] dream indicates something like real sense: real sense of our condition, real sense of our knowledge. So in this case, [the] dream becomes important for the practice, for progressing our knowledge of practice.[5]

Lucid Dreaming in Psychotherapy: A Review

As a Gestalt psychotherapist and a firm "dream believer," I have always been interested in the psychotherapeutic potential of lucid dreaming. It has been shown that dreams and dreamwork hold tremendous therapeutic potential,[6] and I have often experienced that as well. In fact, keeping a dream journal alone favors the self-healing mechanisms. But what is or might lucid dreaming be in psychiatric terminology? A state of dissociation? A state of association? An altered state of consciousness—and if so, what would that

be? A trance–hypnoid–flow–mindfulness experience during sleep? Is lucid dreaming something like paradoxical dreaming or a phenomenon of emergence?

My thoughts about lucid dreaming in psychotherapy are based on my experiences as a psychotherapist having specialized in sleep, sleep disorders, dreams, and lucid dreaming. In several research projects we were also able to show that lucid dreaming is a very potent means for treating nightmares.[7] Perhaps there are other benefits as well.

As a researcher, I am interested in how lucid dreaming might fit in psychotherapeutic concepts—not just the one I have been trained in, but others as well. Might lucid dreaming be a healing technique independent of psychotherapeutic concepts? For example, Mathias Varga von Kibed, a German scholar and leading expert in systemic family constellation work, has a great interest in lucid dreaming and always mentions *Istikhara*—an Islamic esoteric concept in the context of lucid dreaming. He likes to think of systemic family constellation work as a lucid daydream, if I have understood him correctly.

There are some psychotherapeutic schools in which lucid dreaming might be explained, but each has its own emphases. In the following, I pick a few that seem to be somehow connected to lucid dreaming. As I obviously cannot give a full explication of each school of thought here, I try to describe the gist of each theoretical framework in the context of lucid dreaming.

Behavioral Therapy

Behavioral therapy explains one of the best ways to learn lucid dreaming—namely, via repetition and regular training. However, behavioral therapy has no concepts to explain the subjective ecstatic experience of lucid dreaming and how behavioral change might happen (at night during sleep). The shortcoming of behavioral therapy is that there are hardly any concepts of dreaming to be found, not to mention lucid dreaming.

Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis, in contrast, has well-defined concepts of dreaming and what dreaming might be and do to us, including an acknowledgment of the power of the unconscious. Freud was informed about lucid dreaming but he never

responded to that information in depth, having mentioned it in just one brief footnote in the introduction to his *Interpretation of Dreams*. That a lucid dreamer potentially knows what the dream means seems to be quite contradictory to psychoanalysis, as the analyst becomes fully excluded in this process of understanding.

Jungian Psychology

Jungian psychology provides an inspiring concept of what and how dream figures can be understood through the archetypes and archetypal images. It also suggests that dreams might serve as a door to the *collective unconscious*, by which dreams are seen as emerging from a collective experience that fulfills its function in every culture. A stronger reading of the collective unconscious gives way to phenomena such as dream telepathy and precognitive dreams.

Hypnotherapy

Hypnotherapy seems to be quite close to the concept and experience of lucid dreaming as I understand it. My colleague Henning Alberts, who lives and works in Stuttgart, and I are currently working on the connections between hypnosis and lucid dreaming and are very much looking forward to exploring that promising connection. To me, lucid dreaming seems to be the epiphany of hypnosis—a high in concentration and focusing during a state of deep relaxation. One of the most potent ways to experience lucid dreaming is, of course, hypnosis via deep relaxation and via post-hypnotic suggestions. The common practice of using auto-suggestions before sleep to induce lucidity is also conceptually linked to hypnosis. One might argue that "deeper" states of relaxation than dreaming exist, but this discussion would fill a book. In this light, the hypnotherapeutic approach to working with those "inner pictures" could provide a framework for how a lucid dreamer could behave and meet challenging aspects in a lucid dream. Hypnosis and hypnotherapy see dreams as an expression of the unconscious, considering them as friendly messengers regardless of how horrible the dream content might be, and deciphering them via hypnotic, or trance, states. Free association, relaxation, active imagination, and the whole setting of a psychotherapeutic session could be viewed as trance inducing.[8] For hypnotherapists, dreamwork is a literally a

state of trance.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a fairly modern technique stemming from Buddhist practice, as does Gestalt therapy, which calls the same or similar concepts *awareness* rather than *mindfulness*. As both techniques focus on training constant concentration and awareness and aim for the dreamer to achieve a better relation to his or her body or physical and social being, the mindfulness approach may improve the possibility of learning and practicing lucid dreaming.

Gestalt Therapy

My point of view is a Gestalt therapeutic one. Gestalt therapy (GT) belongs to the approaches of depth psychology and is also referred to as "therapy of emotions." Even though Gestalt might have the reputation of being outdated, it also enjoys a secret following among the therapy schools, at least in the German-speaking scene, as a means to either deepen students' work or simply accelerate it. GT is considered offspring of psychoanalysis, as its founder, Fritz Perls, was a psychoanalyst sent to South Africa to build the psychoanalytic institute there. GT is rooted in, but not synonymous with, Gestalt psychology (the German-based psychology of perception), as well as the arts (particularly theater), the work of Christian philosopher Martin Buber, field theory, and Zen Buddhism. These roots are still reflected in GT theory, even though Perls, a revolutionary mind of the 1960s, coined the phrase, "Lose your mind and come to your senses."

The most widely known and probably efficient "tool" in Gestalt is the role-play; in English, it is called the *two-chair method*: empty chair and hot seat. It classically takes place in a group setting. The client who wishes to "work" takes the "hot seat," and then projects under the supervision of the therapist who assists with whatever needs to be integrated.[9] Integration and closure and, therefore, the capability of inner growth are the immanent goals of Gestalt therapy, even though therapists might claim that they have no goals, that they merely accompany the client.

The principles of Gestalt work also apply to dreamwork in Gestalt.[10] Dreams are an existential message and should be reexperienced and not

interpreted, by means of role-play, painting, drawing, or relaxation.[11] During the dreamwork, awareness of emotions and bodily sensations is key. The "here and now" is of importance, with an understanding that menacing dream figures and objects as unknown or repressed aspects of the self that desire to be integrated into the personality so as to instigate the process of (self-) healing and inner freedom.[12] Simkin summarizes this view: "According to the Gestalt therapy framework, everything in your dream is some aspect of yourself, and in effect when you are dreaming, you are writing your own script. . . . Most therapies see the dream as a disguised message. In Gestalt therapy, the message is an existential existence."[13]

I describe all of this in such detail because I am convinced that when using lucid dreaming in psychotherapy, a psychotherapeutic framework is crucial, for both the therapist and the dreamer. I am not sure the choice of a particular framework is important, as long as that framework follows along the lines of basic humanism and supports human growth. All these theories are only theories after all and, therefore, must be insufficient. Most important is that the lucid dreamer is given a theoretical framework to start with that provides some structure and security.

To enter the open space of lucid dreaming might be quite intimidating for a client and a theoretical framework might be a good handhold. Of course, some therapists are most likely of another opinion and might argue that the framework determines whether and how the client evolves. I believe in emancipation and democracy and would like to return the responsibility for behavior to my client, at least eventually, even though some clients at a given point in time might need guidance desperately.

Can Everyone Safely Learn Lucid Dreaming?

This might be a good time to discuss my concerns about whether everyone can or should learn lucid dreaming. In my opinion, lucid dreaming holds great potential for inner development, but according to the psychodynamic structure of a person, that potential might also give way to destructive aspects of a personality. Many of my lucid dreaming colleagues disagree in this aspect, but I exercise caution as we are still exploring our inner dreaming landscapes. There are many theories but not enough research to prove them.

Case Study 1: Mr. X

Several years ago, a somewhat disoriented 30-year-old graphic design student, Mr. X, approached me, stating that he wished to take part in our nightmare project as a nightmare sufferer. In our first session aiming to find out who qualified for participation, it turned out that he did not really meet our requirements of having nightmares several times per week. Instead, he simply wanted to learn how to lucid dream cheaply. Thus he neither participated in our project nor partook in any psychotherapeutic engagement.

Sometime later, a friend of Mr. X participated in a lucid dreaming workshop. In the course of that workshop, the friend told me about him and told me that Mr. X was not doing so well. He had joined a psychedelic plant group and was more attracted to "esoteric" thinking, as his friend worded it. I was asked to meet with them together. That meeting was somewhat bewildering, as Mr. X told me proudly that he had met with the devil in his—by now frequent—lucid dreams, and that he had made a pact with him. The devil would grant him superpowers. Mr. X. apparently had been having difficulties meeting potential mates of the other sex. His theory was that he would meet his perfect mate in a dream and get to know her. Then, in real waking life, their paths would cross and he would already be her mate, without the challenging getting-to-know-you process. All that sounded alarming to me, and I recommended that he seek help in a psychiatric inpatient clinic. Mr. X also had joined a group experimenting with more psychedelic substances, such as the mushrooms *Amanita muscaria*, commonly known as fly agaric.

A few weeks later, his friend contacted me and was very upset. Mr. X was found dead in the Danube River. Apparently, the night after a psychedelic plant meeting, he was convinced he could fly and jumped from one of the Danube bridges to his death. I was shocked to hear the news and, of course, would not claim that his escapist and maybe ego-inflated beliefs about lucid dreaming and meeting and dealing with the devil caused his jump, as he obviously had engaged in some other self-destructive activities. However, these thoughts and beliefs played a role. Had Mr. X undertaken therapy and had these thoughts been approached and his underlying issues overcome, who knows if he would have had to jump.

So, should lucid dreaming not to be recommended for certain groups of patients? Tholey and LaBerge both claimed that no reservations are

necessary. LaBerge also claimed that through the reality check techniques for learning lucid dreaming, the patient actually holds a tool for assessing the state of being.[14] However, my concern is that patients with psychosis or leaning toward a loss of a sense of reality may not be suitable candidates for lucid dreaming. Histrionic patients might have difficulties learning lucid dreaming as well. Patients with a narcissistic personality disorder might, if not properly guided, lose themselves in delusional self-perception. Today, I would not claim that there are those individuals who should not lucid dream. Nevertheless, I recommend that for some, guidance is desperately required; for others, it is recommended; and for still others, it is simply relieving and supportive. I am not saying that we should refrain from lucid dreaming, but I am saying that we should exercise caution and take the process one step at a time as we come to understand what it is and where we are going when we dream lucidly.

In some academic circles, there are lingering concerns that there may be dreadful consequences to consciously entering the unconscious. To that supposition, I would say that the dream world may not be as unconscious as we think of it. I would encourage taking up the discussion again of what the unconscious might be. We dream at least five times per night, assuming we sleep eight hours. I hardly know any lucid dreamer who dreams lucidly every time, every night. That adds up to at least four dreams per night that are not lucid, in which the so-called unconscious can take care of whatever it is supposed to.

However, as the case of Mr. X illustrates, the misuse of lucid dreaming for escapism is a concern. In my opinion, the concept that what you do or experience in a dream directly continues in waking life seems a mistake if understood literally and should be avoided. There might be many more pros and cons to lucid dreaming. It is about time that we start investigating them further, as the interest in lucid dreaming is finally growing.

Potential Benefits of Lucid Dreaming

I am convinced that lucid dreaming is very powerful for our psyche and that it should be viewed with respect. Lucid dreaming might give a tremendous boost to inner growth. In psychotherapeutic terms, the joy and elation that

can be known in lucid dreams in themselves have healing potential. Some people may not have had the chance to experience joy to this elevated degree and having felt it in a dream might eventually cause a ripple that extends into waking life. The right to pursue happiness is in the U.S. Constitution, but not in any of its European counterparts. Perhaps this is one reason why lucid dreaming is much more widely known in the United States than in the Old World.

For patients suffering from emotional "flatness" or alexithymia, the emotionality that can be experienced during lucid dreaming might have a healing effect, as getting to know one's world of feelings and being able to "try them out" in lucid dreams seems to have therapeutic value. For other groups, taking charge and being in control might be a valuable learning experience in a lucid dream. Last, but not least, learning to bear freedom and the possibility to having choices might be a novel experience for some.

Case Study 2: Mrs. A

Mrs. A was a participant in one of my lucid dreaming workshops. She learned lucid dreaming extremely quickly. Indeed, in the first night of that workshop, she was already conducting wild experiments such as leaving her body, turning lights on and off, penetrating walls, and losing arms or legs—all of which made me somewhat concerned. A year or so after that, I met her again and was, of course, very interested how she and her dream world were doing. Mrs. A seemed somewhat more "colorful" and "relieved" than the year before. The year before, she seemed very reliable, but also somewhat suppressed and definitely "over-adjusted" in her looks and her outfit. One might speculate that she had suffered depressive symptoms. She reassured me that she was doing just fine. She was still working as a secretary in a job she liked very much, but she had divorced her husband and now felt free and relieved. Of course, I also wanted to know if she was still dreaming so intensively and so lucidly. She was not.

I wanted to know if lucid dreaming had an effect on her. She passionately agreed. She claimed when she started to realize in her dreams that her choices mattered, she realized that the same was true in her waking life as well and she started to take responsibility for her life. That resulted in a divorce of a quite oppressive husband and the end of an unhappy marriage.

Grief often comes with dreams in which the dreamer is seemingly trying

to fully understand and accept the horrible loss of a loved one. Dreamers often try to meet their lost ones in their dreams. In case of grief, I also caution the dreamer and the lucid dreamer to seek someone to help them work with these dreams. There seem to be dreamers who are stuck and are not able to let go. Once I was approached by an older widow who continued living with her deceased husband in her dreams for years; she could not to be convinced to cut this connection. In a crisis like grieving, lucid dreaming offers many ways of help but also many means of abuse or unhealthiness.

Relief can come when the dreamer is able to address issues with the deceased or is able to say goodbye if that was not possible in waking life. When the grieving process can come to a healthy closure, it is often reported that the deceased is seen in the (lucid) dreams to enter wonderful bright light. Unfortunately, lucid dreaming also holds the potential to keep an unhealthy relationship alive in the (lucid) dreams. In that case, the survivor needs additional guidance.

Dreams, Healing, and Health Management

Recently, I have become more interested in the relationship between dreaming and physical health/illness, which can be seen as foundational to the topic of the healing potential of lucid dreaming. So far, there are only a few research projects devoted to these questions. In the literature, Russian psychiatrist Vasily Kasatkin, born in 1912, talked about physiological processes underlying dreaming.[15] Freud believed that dreams represented unconscious wishes that were repressed because they were unacceptable. He also believed that organic states could instigate dreams—example, patients with lung disease might dream of suffocation or patients with heart disease might dream that they died horribly.[16]Jung also believed that dreams contained unrecognized information that patients needed to understand and integrate into their consciousness.

It was not until the 21st century that researchers brought material together from different disciplines to shed some light on the connection between dreams and medical illness. Kath and Shapiro note that dreams may reflect the presence of organic disease, precipitate organic disease, and serve as a marker for either psychological conflict or personality traits that might

influence the development of organic disease (so-called psychosomatic illness).[17] *Continuity theory* has demonstrated convincingly that dream content can be related to the dreamer's waking-day concerns, thereby providing insight into the dreamer's waking thoughts, feelings, and experiences. In conjunction with the ability of dreams to reflect the physical health of the dreamer,[18] dreams can serve as a valuable tool for revealing important aspects of the dreamer's physical, mental, and emotional life. For some illnesses, dreams are even a means for definition—for example, narcolepsy is characterized by vivid, bizarre, often frightening dreams and PTSD is associated with different kinds of dreams and flashbacks.

Dreams about death and dying are prevalent among people with serious organic (especially cardiac) disease. Smith has shown dreams of death (among men) and dreams of separation (among women) correlate both with worse clinical outcomes independent of the disease, and with the severity of cardiac dysfunction (measured by ejection fraction) in patients with cardiac disease.[19] Dreams of "lost resources" have been linked to the finding of brain atrophy on computed tomography in elderly patients without signs of organic brain disease.[20]

Several groups of researchers have shown that there is a correlation between breathing and breathing problems and dream content.[21] In a 1998 epidemiological study focusing on the sleep behavior of the Austrian population, our group found that there was a direct correlation between nightmares and snoring or subjective complaints about sleep apnea.[22]

Alcoholism has also been successfully linked to changes in dream content. A 2009 study of 29 subjects examined the dreams and discovery of recovering alcoholics compared to a matched sample of nonalcoholics. The waking-day mood of these individuals was also examined. Not surprisingly, the dreams of recovering alcoholics featured images of apprehension, confusion, aggression, anger, misfortunes, sadness, and drinking. In fact, 31 percent of the dreams had imagery related to drinking; for example, a young man dreams that he is in a bar with his drinking friends and they are all drinking beer together. In light of this conversation relating dreams to both emotional and physical health, recovering alcoholics reported more total emotions in dreams and more happiness than nonalcoholics. Recovering alcoholics also reported more characters in their dreams.[23]

One of my students, Ms. Deltl, devoted her master's thesis in psychology

to the question of whether lucid dreaming could help alcoholism. Her hypothesis was based on a finding of Harry Fiss—namely, that alcoholics dreaming with a good feeling about drinking alcohol after the physical withdrawal had a better chance to stay sober than the ones drinking alcohol in their dreams with a bad conscience. Ms. Deltl led a self-help group of former alcoholics who had undergone physical withdrawal, in which group members were asked to keep a sleep-and-dream diary. She found that for around three months the alcoholics dreamed predominantly about drinking; after that, the theme faded their dreams. She tried to teach them how to lucid dream, but only one participant was able to learn this technique. After a year, he had been able to stay free from alcohol. Unfortunately, Ms. Deltl has not published her findings, but to me this is a very promising strand of research.

The emotional and physical effects of breast cancer can also be reflected in dreams. A 2010 study examined the dreams of 34 women, 17 of whom had been diagnosed with breast cancer and 17 of whom had not.[24] The women with breast cancer had specific imagery relating to cancer and to the illnesses of others (e.g., mother with cancer). It appears that these findings support the continuity hypothesis of dreaming, in that having breast cancer was directly related to the imagery created by the dreaming mind, representing the illness itself as well as important cognitive and emotional factors relating to the illness. For example, the torso, medical figures such as doctors and nurses, pain, and references to death and cancer all appeared significantly more frequently in the dreams of women with breast cancer than in the dreams of women without breast cancer.[25]

The Potential of Lucid Dreaming Therapy

Given the associations of health and illness with dreams in general, lucid dreaming may be able to focus and strengthen the awareness of illness and perhaps guide the healing process on its own accord. A good place to start is the psychotherapeutic potential of lucid dreaming for those who are suffering from nightmares.[26]

Nightmares are vivid and terrifying nocturnal episodes in which the dreamer is abruptly awakened from sleep. Heart rate and breathing are accelerated upon awakening. Typically, the dreamer wakes from REM sleep

—often in the second half of the night—and is able to describe a detailed dream plot. Topics often touch upon situations that threaten the dreamer's life, security, or self-esteem. Usually, the dreamer has difficulty returning to sleep; thus nightmares can create lasting sleep problems. As several varieties of nightmares exist, we will probably find in the future more differentiated definitions of nightmares, such as the bad dream, idiopathic nightmare, flashback, and several others.

Approximately 4 to 10 percent of the general population has nightmares once a week, and about 85 percent of adults report having experienced at least one nightmare within the last year. Rates seem to be quite robust across different cultures. Nightmare frequency usually decreases with age and women are more affected than men. Often nightmare sufferers also belong to a psychiatric clientele and have a number of comorbid chronic health problems (e.g., migraine headache, cardiac disease, drug or alcohol abuse). Disturbing dreams and nightmares are prevalent in the general population and occur in 60 percent of those diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder.[27]

Causes of nightmares are manifold. Some examples of causes include other sleep disorders and complaints, such as sleep apnea, snoring, asthma, REM behavior disorder, insomnia, and narcolepsy; psychological/psychiatric problems such as anxiety, depression, traumatic events, borderline personality, schizophrenia, psychosis, stress, crisis, burnout, and internal conflict; physical illnesses, including internal diseases, neurological diseases (Alzheimer, Parkinson, epilepsy), and oncological diseases; pregnancy; TV and movies; substances such as psychotropic drugs and medications; and thin boundaries.

Current Approaches to Treating Nightmares

The approaches for reducing nightmare frequency/intensity/distress include the following.

Exposure Therapy

In this treatment, the patient focuses on and describes the details of a traumatic experience. In 2010, Nacasch and co-authors reported that prolonged exposure therapy was superior to usual PTSD treatment approaches in the short- and long-term reduction of PTSD and depression

symptoms.[28]

Systematic Desensitization

A classic approach, desensitization has been shown to be effective in reducing nightmare frequency and nightmare intensity for more than 30 years.

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) Therapy

This approach for trauma treatment in general and nightmares in PTSD was developed by Shapiro. It involves bilateral stimulation (e.g., eye movements, tones, or tapping) during each session when the client "reexperiences" the traumatizing event.[29]

Pharmaceuticals

Drugs such as hypnotics and thymoleptics suppress REM sleep and, therefore, can also decrease the frequency of nightmares. This approach is highly limited by the fact that nightmares return as soon as these medications are discontinued. The use of prazosin and beta blockers is a promising development in the pharmacotherapy of nightmares, as these agents increase REM sleep continuity. Overall, pharmacotherapy can provide only a temporary solution.

Imagery Rehearsal Therapy

First described by Krakow for treating nightmares, imagery rehearsal therapy (IRT) involves four 2-hour sessions. Each session proceeds through confrontation, writing or drawing the nightmare, coping with the nightmare situation, writing a new dream content, changing the negative, anxiety-cathected dream content to positive content, and training of the coping strategy—that is, thinking of the new dream during 2 weeks for 5–10 minutes per day.[30] IRT can be conceptualized as a two-component therapeutic process, where each component targets a distinct, yet overlapping problem in the individual with nightmares. The first component addresses "nightmares as

a learned sleep disorder," similar to a learned behavior perspective on insomnia. The second component addresses "nightmares as the symptom of a damaged imagery system."

Krakow was able to show that his IRT approach is able to reduce the frequency and intensity of nightmares and to increase sleep quality in survivors of sexual assault and in crime victims with PTSD.[31] Germain and Nielson showed improvement among nightmare patients in terms of nightmare frequency.[32] These studies also found that symptoms of anxiety, depression, and PTSD decreased after nightmare treatment. Patients with PTSD are more eager to treat their sleep first, their nightmares second, and finally their PTSD. Direct treatment of nightmares with cognitive-behavioral methods has been associated with a reduction in anxiety and sleep complaints in chronic nightmare sufferers without PTSD and with improvement in PTSD symptoms in a sample of sexual assault survivors.[33]

Gestalt Therapy

GT is still regarded as the most confrontational of the therapeutic methods. In Gestalt therapy, by means of identification, perception, and confrontation (often via role-play applying the two-chair technique) the dream is reexperienced in the therapy session and, therefore, loses its frightening content. Recently, GT has proved to be one of the most efficient techniques in the treatment of diagnoses that include nightmares as one of their symptoms, such as PTSD.[34]

Tenets of Lucid Dreaming Therapy

All of the currently used strategies for treating nightmares are "post hoc"—that is, they are applied during waking. Lucid dreaming offers a new potential: interacting consciously within the dream itself. Recently, the potential role of lucid dreaming in the treatment of nightmares has attracted the interest of the scientific community. Numerous personal reports and case reports on the therapeutic application of lucid dreaming in recurrent nightmares describe a reduction of both nightmare frequency and nightmare stress.[35] The main advantage of lucid dreaming therapy over other techniques is that the nightmare sufferer has a tool that can be applied when the nightmare occurs. This enables self-responsibility and self-control over one's

action, independently of a therapist, trainer, or psychologist.

According to Paul Tholey, the benefits of lucid dreaming include a positive change of the personality structure, which manifests itself in the disappearance of nightmares, increased ego strength, the disappearance of anxiety and obsessive-compulsive symptoms, increased self-confidence, and emotional safety and balance.[36] The evidence for these benefits is far from well established, however. For example, Spoormaker and van Bout found no significant effects specifically from lucid dreaming on the reduction of nightmares.[37] They also showed that the group situation does not necessarily play an important role in the treatment of nightmares.

The potential therapeutic effects of lucid dream therapy are primarily based on the following tenets:

- The realization of the dreamer that there is no danger to his or her physical existence allows the dreamer —despite persistent fear —to behave differently and in a more controlled way and, therefore, to break with inherent negative expectations.
- The dream ego is less afraid of threatening dream figures or situations because of the added cognitive and decision abilities while dreaming. For this reason, less resistance to confrontation with these figures or situations can be expected.[38]
- During the dream, its significance may be captured and transformed and the awareness that it is just a dream may reduce its perceived importance.[39]

Lucid Dreaming Therapy Combined with Gestalt Group Therapy

Under the umbrella of the Institute for Consciousness and Dream Research, my colleagues and I were able to find funding for investigating lucid dreaming—or as we called it for funding's sake, "cognition in sleep"—as a psychotherapeutic technique for overcoming nightmares. As this project was quite successful in its outpatient setting, we were interested in applying our approach to a group of patients in a hospital setting. Specifically, we chose to work with patients diagnosed with PTSD.[40]

We compared Gestalt group therapy alone with the combination of Gestalt group therapy and lucid dreaming training. Three fourths of the participants (75 percent) were able to experience lucid dreaming in nine weeks. There was a reduction of nightmare frequency in both groups, even though the group with the additional lucid dreaming training had a significant increase in dream recall frequency. Taking the increase in dream recall frequency into account, the reduction of nightmares in the lucid dreaming training group was significant. An important result is that both groups showed a significant improvement in quality of sleep, as measured by the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI), from disturbed sleep to normal sleep.

How lucidity was applied or used to overcome the nightmares was left to the nightmare sufferers themselves. That brought some interesting observations. The nightmare sufferers developed quite individual ways to reduce the number of nightmares or the suffering associated with those experiences. For example, one participant said that now she knew she was dreaming in her nightmares, she would stay away from changing or not having those dreams, because she currently experiences them as exciting nightly adventures.

There are, of course, many ways of reacting to a threatening situation. One subject developed the skill in which, having realized the dream state, he went back "in time" to a point in the dream before the threat had started and continued to dream in another direction. Another dreamer simply ordered "stop," and another one fully confronted the threat and started a dialogue, often merging with the formerly threatening dream entity afterward. The confrontation often requires a preceding process, such as looking for a safe place or dream helpers. Especially for the PTSD-sufferers, it seemed to be helpful and relieving to know how to wake themselves up whenever desired.

Overall, it seems that lucid dreaming provides self-empowerment in dreams and that this technique has a therapeutic effect at least for those individuals who are lacking such self-empowerment.

Case Study 3: Mr. W

One participant in our project was a young man diagnosed with narcolepsy, a sleep disorder often accompanied by fragmented sleep, cataplectic attacks and fatigue during the day, and *hypnagogic imagery*. This imagery, which is seen at sleep onset, was mostly horrible and threatening. Mr. W. wanted to

find out if lucid dreaming could help him suffer less from these horrible hypnagogic pictures. Indeed, a few times he was able to enter his painful imagery and was in that vein able to reduce the suffering from these haunting inner pictures. I am particularly fond of this observation because narcolepsy is considered a genetic disease. So far, there is no remedy against it; narcoleptic patients experience quite compromised lifestyles. Mr. W. knew that these "dreams" would not disappear, but being able to enter and stop them provided some relief from his suffering and his perceived helplessness.

Case Study 4: Mrs. L

In 2009, a group of colleagues and I were able to show that the lucid dreaming treatment of nightmares decreased general symptoms such as depression and anxiety in patients with PTSD to a significant extent, whereas the number of nightmares and impact of nightmares did not change after six weeks of training sessions.[41] Six weeks is not very long, particularly for a patient group with severe traumatization and medication. This result could be explained by the technique's bringing back to attention the nightmares (and probably the related trauma) and, therefore, reducing the results of suppression—namely, depression and anxiety—but somewhat favoring the underlying cause of the trauma itself and addressing it.

Mrs. L had had suffered multiple traumatizations in her life. Her grandfather abused her sexually from when she was 8 years old; a rape by three adolescents followed when she was 13. She later underwent treatment because her former husband, whom she had fled, had stalked her with a gun, often pointing the gun to her forehead and forcing her to come back to him. She was now approximately 50 years old and had been on sick leave for several months after a devastating accident, from which she had a difficult time in recovery.

Her husband was often the theme of her recurrent nightmares. Mrs. L dreamed that scenario several times per week and would wake up frightened and breathless with a pounding heart. She reported:

> I dreamt at around 2 a.m. that my ex [the former boyfriend whom she had divorced 12 years ago] chases me by car through the city in which we used to live. He yelled: "I'll catch you and I'll kill you." Running away, I felt bad aches in my legs and couldn't move right. This all happened at night; nevertheless, I saw him and his pointed gun. He tried to shoot at me, but didn't hurt me. I woke up in my bed sitting [up].

Mrs. L had tried diligently to follow our instructions for learning lucid dreaming. We had talked about what could be done in the frightening situation of a recurrent nightmare, and I had mentioned that there are many ways out and that we are able to choose. In only the first week of therapy, Mrs. L reported that her dream had slightly shifted in tone:

> A colleague of my ex had seen me and told him about that. So he chased me again through the city in a car. Never mind where I ran—he found me everywhere and grinned sadistically. Shortly before he ran me down with his car, I woke up. I fell back asleep and dreamt that dream again.

She did wake up before the actual event, but she would try to not sleep because she was afraid and upset. Of course, she also had severe sleep problems.

The next dream in the series showed some signs of our training that took place in a group of people within the inpatient program at the clinic:

> At around 3 a.m. I dream that my ex chases me, again by cab. I cried for help. Many people came out of their houses and together we walked towards him. He disappeared.

This dream is also a nightmare, but there has been remarkable change: Mrs. L was able to seek and find help in her nightmare for the first time. She was not all alone with her problem anymore. Strengthened by her helpers, she was able to confront and walk toward the victimizer. He disappeared—a novel development for Mrs. L. She is not lucid in this dream, but what we had fantasized when talking about that dream and that situation had entered her dream. Seeking help and finding a safe place are techniques used by hypnotherapists to empower patients with PTSD. Helplessness often underlies these patients' inability to overcome a traumatizing situation. In this case, Mrs. L experienced a new level of inner strength in her dream. We believe that the dream experience is more direct and perhaps also more potentially effective than treatments using waking fantasy for rescripting.

Twenty-seven days after the beginning of the project, Mrs. L had the following dream:

> At around 2:30 a.m. I dreamt again that my ex chased me again in a cab. I ran and ran, but was unable to cry for help. No sound came out; my voice had left me. He threatened me again with his gun. At some point I was able to simply yell, "STOP." I woke up. After I had fallen asleep again, the dream continued; I ran, stumbled, and woke up.

Mrs. L was able to escape the situation, the dream. This decision was clear and conscious. She fell back asleep again and apparently that one success was not quite enough for a change, so she dreamed the dream again. She struggles: Should she believe herself and her own powers or should she stay in the old pattern of being victimized?[42]

In the process of the project, Mrs. L had her recurrent nightmare over and over again. Sometimes she was able to take control; sometimes she wasn't, as if the novel experience was not fully believed or wanted. The last dream that she reported in the course of the project occurred six weeks after the beginning of our project:

> My ex chased me in a cab. This time the pointed gun was oversized. With a sadistic grin, he yelled that he will kill me. I now yelled back that he should do it. I ran towards a downhill slope; he stumbled and fell down the hill. I looked but couldn't see him anymore. The cab and he had disappeared. I woke up, this time not frightened, but somewhat relieved.

This time, Mrs. L did not seek help, nor did she choose to wake up. Instead, she confronted the enemy and apparently "gave in," but actually she ran to the downhill slope where her victimizer fell into oblivion. One could say that she had overcome him and her fear for the first time. One time is not a full healing, but it is a good start. We hope that Mrs. L will have many more experiences of successful handling of her nightmares as well as her trauma. After six weeks, her nightmares were not reduced in number, but they had changed significantly and overall her anxiety and depression had lessened. A full healing of multiple traumas in such a short time cannot be expected, but the process of healing might have been started and concepts from lucid dreaming certainly played a role.

After our treatment was over, Mrs. L reportedly dreamed that dream again, but not as often as she had before and in great variations. Particularly in the first two weeks of having to deal with the dream by herself, the helplessness themes dominated. Later, however, she dreamed again that her dream aggressor disappeared or that she could wake herself up and was able to rescue herself. The themes were repeated in that dream scenario, but the dream now has not just one way of ending, but a variety of possibilities.

In Conclusion: A Tool for Self-Actualization during

Sleep

As we saw, there is already research on dreams and nightmares in psychotherapy, but such investigation has barely just begun and much more is needed. What is the healing nature of lucid dreaming and how can it better target the healing process? How does awareness of the state diminish fear? Lucid dreaming is a gaze that wakes the dreamer up or leads to self-awakening or a possible escape from an otherwise horrible experience—therefore it is a "safe place." Lucid dreaming also provides the possibility of encounter and/or confrontation with, for example, significant others in waking life, including deceased loved ones, making a dialogue possible and in this vein consequently favoring the integration of aspects of oneself. Lucid dreaming enables the dreamer to potentially overcome inner fears by empowerment, ego strength, or whatever one prefers to call that force and, therefore, could help to rewrite one's inner script of life.

I believe lucid dreaming has the potential to make us better people. It can not only help us overcome psychological difficulties and physical illnesses, but, if approached in the right and respectful way, can also instigate our spiritual side—helping us develop and have telepathic, precognitive, and creative dreams, and connecting us to others and the world.

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4

Lucid Dreaming as Sleep Meditation

James F. Pagel

> Let us imagine the dreamer: in the midst of the illusion of the dream world and without dreaming it, he calls out to himself: "It is a dream, I will dream on." What must we infer? That he experiences a deep inner joy in dream contemplation; on the other hand, to be at all able to dream with this inner joy of contemplation, he must have completely lost sight of waking reality and its ominous obtrusiveness.
>
> —Friedrich Nietzsche[1]

Since the dawn of human history, dreams have been studied, recorded, and used. It is not surprising that volitional dream control—what we now call lucid dreaming—was incorporated into ancient religious practice. For the last two millennia, the monks of some of the Buddhist lineages have been taught to control dream content and develop lucid dreaming as a meditative approach. This remarkable cognitive accomplishment potentially predates the historic Buddha. Dream and sleep meditation, part of the Dzogchen or "Great Perfection" tradition of Buddhism, pushes against the accepted definitions and borders that philosophers and dream scientists have developed for wake, sleep, and consciousness.[2]

Sleep and Dreams

At the transition from sleep to wake, reports of mental activity (what we call dreams) differ, based on the sleep stage from which the individual is awakening. Some dreaming states exist just across the borderline from waking. Individuals arouse easily from these states and often report detailed dream content. Sometimes that content can be difficult to differentiate from waking. Other dreams are reported on arousal from sleep states that are vastly different from waking. The dreams of deep sleep (Stage 3) include content and behaviors on awakening (parasomnias) that are bizarre and markedly

different from waking experience.[3]

Behaviorally, sleep is a state of reversible perceptual dissociation, with the lack of perceptual input as the primary behavioral characteristic contrasting the sleeping state from the waking state. However, perceptual isolation is not an absolute during sleep. Sounds, particularly the sound of your name, and noxious stimuli can be incorporated as dream content. This is most often reported as occurring in the sleep stages that are closer to waking consciousness, such as rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, sleep onset (Stage 1), and Stage 2 sleep.[4] Perceptual dissociation, however, defines sleep and is at least a partial characteristic of the dreamlike states that exist on the border between wake and sleep, such as lucid dreaming. Characteristically in REM sleep, and at least partially in other sleep stages, a motor block also exists that prevents the potential actions or expressions of sleeping thoughts so that the physical acting out of a dream does not usually occur.

Lucidity

Lucid dreaming was initially described as "being awake in your dreams" and as "dreaming while being fully conscious that you are dreaming."[5] Currently, lucid dreaming is often described as the experience of achieving conscious awareness of dreaming while asleep.[6] Based on these definitions, however, most dreams have lucid characteristics. It is exceedingly rare for a dream not to be described from the dreamer's point of view with the dreamer present, and at some level aware, as part of the content and story of every dream.

Yet the observable characteristics of lucid dreaming, the phenomenology, differ from the other forms of sleeping consciousness (Table 4.1).[7] Lucid dreaming has similarities as well as differences with other dream states.

It is unclear as to how frequently lucid dreams are remembered in waking. Lucid dreaming occurs at a higher frequency among individuals with high recall and interest in their dreams, so that it would be expected that most lucid dreams would be recalled, at least at the frequency level of sleep onset and REM sleep dreaming. A recent study that included individuals known to often experience lucid dreaming was able to document an ability to signal observers that lucid dreaming was occurring in only 3 of 12 subjects (25

percent).[8] This finding suggests the possibility that lucid dreaming might occur without waking recall—an interesting situation in which individuals have volitional conscious control during dreaming, yet have no recall or incorporation of that dream into waking.

Lucid dreaming is generally considered to occur in REM sleep, and much of the research into this state has focused on identifying and attempting to prove that lucid dreaming occurs during the REM sleep stage. This postulate, however, was developed during a period in which all dreaming was thought to occur during REM sleep. From the first modern reports, it was noted that up to 18 percent of lucid dreams occur at sleep onset.[9] Lucid dreaming has been reported as well from Stage 1 later in the night and from Stage 2 sleep, particularly in individuals with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).[10] This pattern of sleep stage association is most similar to that of nightmares—dreams that are also salient, with a high degree of waking recall and effect on waking experience.

Table 4.1 The Comparative Phenomenology of Different Forms of Dreaming

	Hypnagogic Dreams	REM Sleep Dreams	Anxiety Dreams	Deep Sleep Dreams	Lucid Dreams	Nightmares	Sleep Meditation
Dream recall frequency	80%	80%	40%	40%	25% to >80%	50–80%	>80%
Sleep stage association	Sleep onset Stage 1	REM sleep	Stage 1 and Stage 2	Stage 3	REM sleep, Stage 1, and Stage 2	REM sleep and sleep onset	Unknown—beginning at sleep onset
Perceptual Isolation	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate	Moderate
Teachability	Moderate	Low	Low	None	High	Low	High
Volitional control	Low	Low	Low	Low	High	Low	High
Bizarreness (Hobson scale)	Low	High	Low	Low	High	High	High
Bizarreness (Hunt scale)	High	Moderate	Low	High	High	High	High
Thought/attention	Disassociated	Focused	Continuity	Unfocused	Focused	Focused	Focused
Memory access	High	High	High	Low	High	Very high	High
Salience (effect on waking)	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Low	High	High	Unknown
EEG frequency	Alpha	Alpha, beta, gamma	Sigma	Delta	Alpha, beta, gamma	Unknown	Unknown; waking—gamma

Conscious control is, by most definitions, a primary characteristic of lucid dreaming. The lucid dreamer can consciously control the action and content of the dream. Only waking states and sleep meditation share this characteristic. The capability for lucid dreaming can be taught, with the trained lucid dreamer able to take active control of dream characters and the storyline of the dream. Sleep mediation is also taught. Other sleep states such as sleep onset can be induced using a protocol that includes self-induced waking after sleep onset. Individuals can also be taught to increase dream recall, by using such techniques as recording dreams on arousal. Dream content can also be altered by incubation and imagery focus before sleep onset. Nevertheless, few other dream states are as amenable to teaching as lucidity and sleep meditation.

Laboratory Lucidity: Signaling

We study lucid dreaming in the sleep laboratory because some lucid dreamers have the ability to volitionally signal during periods of lucidity. During lucid dreaming, some individuals can move or fix their gaze, and use this change in eye movement to signal an external observer. Others can push buttons. This capability can be taught, but it is evidently difficult to learn. Due to the rarity of such accomplished dreamers, research studies are conducted and based on the analysis of only a few individuals. Some major studies have been based on the analysis of just one person.[11] This volitional signaling capability has allowed researchers to analyze lucid dreaming with external real-time scanning technologies. The initial hope for this approach was that scanning during lucid dream episodes would display areas of the central nervous system (CNS) that are active during REM sleep. However, the results of these studies have differed from expectations. During the signaling associated with lucid dreaming, there are multiple activated sites in the CNS that are normally deactivated during REM sleep. The brain areas known to control REM sleep and the motor paralysis associated with REM sleep are not activated during lucid dreaming with signaling.[12] The primary CNS sites that are activated are among those that are known to be involved in working memory and the analysis of visual perception.[13] The functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) data from such investigations have been

interpreted by the authors of these studies to suggest that lucid dreaming is a vastly different state from other forms of dreaming, involving memory and visual systems that are not part of any other form of dreaming or sleep.[14]

Let us look closer at these claims. Bursts of electroencephalography (EEG) alpha (10 Hz) and beta/gamma (30–50 Hz) frequencies occur in association with signaling-associated lucid dreaming (Table 4.2). These same EEG patterns are seen during focused wake, default wake, meditation, and lucid dreaming states—all teachable states of focused awareness under conscious control, with similarities in reported effects on cognitive processing, attention, and recall.[15] Electrophysiologically, the laboratory signaling used to indicate that lucid dreaming is occurring is almost always associated with an episode of arousal from sleep. This has been determined based on EEG monitoring that demonstrates awakenings associated with signaling (when more than 50 percent of a tracing consists of alpha rhythm, by definition an individual is awake rather than asleep). Based on EEG evidence, even the authors of these studies indicate that lucid dreaming with signaling is best viewed as a transitional state between sleep and waking.[16] Therefore, the electrophysiological characteristics of the state are consistent with the research criteria used in establishing the state (volitional eye movements and/or button pushing).

Table 4.2 Comparative Behavioral and EEG Frequency Characteristics of Selected Waking States

	Perceptual Isolation	**Thought Attention**	**Associated Synchronous EEG Frequencies**
Focused wake	Lowest	Focused	Beta/gamma
Self-referential (default) wake	Low	Self-focused	Beta/gamma, delta, 0.5 Hz activity
Drowsy wake	Low	Unfocused	Alpha
Focused meditation	Moderate	Focused	Gamma, alpha
Unfocused meditation	Moderate	Focused/unfocused	Alpha, theta

Volitional signaling, required to establish "the lucid dream state," leads to arousal from sleep. Again, lucid dreaming that includes such signaling is a state in which the sleeper is exerting conscious thought and motor control. To volitionally signal, the lucid dreamer must activate parts of the CNS involved with waking perception and motor control. That activation of working

memory and visual systems is what is seen on scanning fMRI. On EEG, arousals and awakenings are associated with signaling. Lucid dreaming with signaling produces an activation of the CNS components required for the lucid dreamer to be able to signal the watching researchers. The findings of these studies reflect the activation of a CNS process of consciously controlled sleep offset—the opposite of the turning off of consciousness required for sleep onset. The lucid dreamer who is attempting to signal is consciously reinstituting components of working memory and the visual activity systems associated with wakefulness so as to signal researchers that he or she is "dreaming."[17]

Lucidity and the capacity for the conscious awareness of dreaming within dream can be a remarkable experience. However, laboratory findings illustrate that the state of dream lucidity actually disappears and becomes waking when the dreamer attempts to signal the observer. It may be that lucid dreaming is best experienced without attempting to intrude into waking.[18] Lucid dreaming as studied in the laboratory using signaling produces a state that is a hybrid of sleep, waking, and methodological artifacts based on the requirement for consciously controlled awakening. The scanning, sleep stage, and electrophysiological findings derived from the study of this state in the laboratory reflect sleep offset and signaling, and have little to do with cognitive processing associated with the state of lucid dreaming as it has been known and applied historically.

Lucidity and Dreaming

Of the classically described types of dreaming, lucid dreaming shares the most behavioral and electrophysiological characteristics with nightmares.[19] Recall is high for each type of dreaming. Both are primarily associated with REM sleep, yet occur outside REM sleep and at sleep onset primarily in patients with PTSD. The content of each is structured and focused, and often clearly tied to waking experience. Both lucid dreaming and nightmares can induce an extreme emotional response, and both are salient, affecting and altering waking behavior. Both are associated with waking and arousal from sleep. This association is emphasized by multiple studies indicating that lucid dream techniques can be taught to patients to treat and diminish their

distressing nightmares.[20] Despite the similarities, however, there are clear differences between nightmares and lucid dreaming. It is not in the interest of most individuals to strive to have nightmares. We do not teach individuals to have nightmares. We are not in control of our nightmares.

Meditative States

Meditation is difficult to define, with different meanings in different contexts. The word is based on the Latin term *meditari*, meaning "to contemplate," and meditation often includes an internal effort to regulate the mind or senses. There are many different approaches and techniques, and no typical phenomenology associated with meditative practice. Meditation is most often a contemplative, introspective cognitive approach that is part of a religious tradition. In some traditions, meditation is an intense intellectual study that includes empiric analysis of the associated cognition. Some meditative traditions approach consciousness in philosophic detail. Matthew Flickstein suggests:

> Consciousness is actually a continuum of momentary acts of awareness that rise and fall along with their respective objects due to specific causes and conditions . . . Consciousness acts as a type of motion detector, which when triggered, simply illuminates any objects that are within its range . . . Each moment of consciousness can be classified according to the mental factors with which it is associated.[21]

While some meditative approaches focus on such an intense intellectually based cognitive integration, others utilize an experiential approach. Meditation can include the focus on an image, the breath, a passage of teaching, or a repetitive sound. Some traditions, such as Zen Buddhism, approach thoughts occurring during meditation as an interference with the process of meditation.

Meditation is a difficult topic to study scientifically. While there have been attempts to apply Western analytic and scientific tools to the study of meditation, most of these approaches have been used to analyze meditation within a single tradition. There have been few attempts to achieve comparative analysis of different meditation types and approaches due, in part, to the extensive training required for developing proficiency in even one of these techniques. Within each tradition, there is often a marked difference in individual proficiency and meditative capacity that influences how that

practice affects the level of meditative capability and experience as well as CNS functioning. Certain EEG frequency changes are associated with long-term meditative practice, although the typical electrophysiological effects associated with meditative practice vary based on the specific technique.[22] A jumble of data from different techniques and traditions indicates that meditation clearly alters CNS electrophysiology; these changes in electrophysiology occur, however, in a variety of patterns based on meditative technique.

Meditation is not restricted to the wake state. During periods of meditation, many practitioners will have episodes that meet the electroencephalographic criteria for sleep. Transcendental Meditation practitioners have been shown in one study to spend 40 percent of their meditation time in stages of sleep, primarily Stages 1 and 2, but in some cases even Stage 3, also known as deep sleep.[23] Such episodes of sleep during meditation occur most often in meditators who are sleep deprived, tired, or bored. At times such episodes are associated with dreaming mentation, particularly the intense visual hypnagogic experiences with limited thought that are characteristic of sleep-onset dreaming.[24] These findings have led some to suggest that the various kinds of meditation may actually be nothing more than episodic drowsiness or partial sleep. The evidence against such a postulate includes the following: (1) the attentiveness and mental focus required for most forms of meditation, (2) the maintenance of erect motor posturing during meditation, and (3) the volitional observation of thought content and control of that thought that are part of most meditative approaches.[25] In Hindu tradition, it is suggested in the Upanishads that the only difference between sleep and meditative states is awareness.[26] For modern scientists, technology can only support, rather than define, the presence of sleep. By definition, the primary difference between wake and sleep remains this same presence or absence of perceptual awareness.[27]

Sleep Meditation

Sleep and dream meditation has a long history as part of the Dzogchen (Great Perfection) meditative approach, first elucidated by Prahevajra (184 BCE–57 CE). Prahevajra is the Methuselah of Buddhism. Perhaps it was his meditative technique, which included the conflation of sleep with wake, that contributed to his extraordinarily long lifespan. In Tibetan and Vipassana traditions,

Dzogchen practice is sometimes considered the highest and most definitive path to enlightenment.[28] However, lucid dreaming as a component of dream meditation has been incorporated into all of the Buddhist meditative-based approaches and traditions, including the schools of Zen. One objective for many forms of Buddhist meditation is to attain a state in which there is little, if any, differentiation between the dream and waking experience. This can be attained at least in part by limiting sleep via a meditation-around-the-clock schedule typical of most monastic training. Wake becomes drowsy wake, full of micro-sleeps, as sleep becomes meditation.

Some traditions emphasize an extensive time requirement for sitting meditation to achieve enlightenment (enlightenment = time spent meditating).[29] Meditating during drowsiness and sleep extends the amount of time that one is able to spend in the meditative state; once lucidity is established, years of sleep can be spent in meditation, an approach that is potentially more effective and with more consequence than practice done during the day.[30]

Sleep/dream meditation is often initially taught using a four-step protocol:

1. Recognize the dreamlike aspects of waking life. One approach is to wake in the morning and think to yourself, "I am awake in a dream."
2. Recognize that much of waking interaction, emotions, and experience is also dreamlike. Think to yourself, "This anger, this desire, this indignation, this grief, this exuberance is a dream."
3. Next, before sleep, review the memories of the day, attempting to comprehend the dreamlike nature of phenomena and experience, and make the strongest possible intention to realize directly and vividly while dreaming that you are dreaming.
4. On awakening in the morning, review and remember the dreams of the night, lucid or not, resolving that the next time that you enter a dream, you will become aware of dreaming within the dream.[31]

This approach to sleep meditation is clearly training for developing dream lucidity, as well as the incorporation of that dreaming into waking experience. In developing lucidity (the first step into sleep meditation), the practitioner explores the "private theater of the mind." These perceptions, based on dreaming, can be extended into an exploration of external, spatially

and temporally nonlocal influences.[32] For the Buddhist in these lineages, dream meditation is a path that leads to sleep meditation and an exploration of sleep/dream states extending beyond the theater of volitionally controlled dram content. The practitioner's meditative strategy—whether that of focus on breath, energy, or color, or utilization of another approach—is extended into sleep, in which the meditator concentrates on the cessation of visual sensory engagement that typifies sleep onset. The eventual objective of this approach is recognition of the clear and empty light associated with deep sleep. Years of sustained attention and practice are required to attain this meditative state.[33]

Experienced sleep meditators can achieve a state of stabilized lucidity in which they are apparently unable to differentiate waking meditation from normal waking and/or lucid sleep. It is reported from both the Hindu and Buddhist traditions that individuals with extensive training in meditation sleep little and often lose the ability to dream. Many dreams are reported from the historic Buddha's youth and early adulthood, but once he achieved enlightenment, it is reported that he no longer dreamed.[34]

Shared Characteristics of Lucid Dreaming and Sleep Meditation

In lucid dreaming and sleep meditation, we observe a limit for the human capacity for the cognitive control of thought. Both of these states can be taught. Both are the only sleep states that have the characteristic of volitional control. While volitional control of dreaming is required to enter both states, it has been suggested that focus on aspects of control can have negative consequences. Excessive focus on deliberate control of dreaming and meditation can result in a loss of content as well as the loss of the expansive "peak experience" quality that can be derived from both states.[35]

Lucid dreams can be so vivid that they verge on full wakefulness, exhibiting a level of attention and focus that is as distinct from dreaming as it is from the 90 percent of waking not spent in focused attention.[36] Experienced mediators have significantly more lucid dreams.[37] Individuals who utilize the sleep/dream meditative practice can attain a level in which

they cannot differentiate between lucidity, awakening, and spontaneous meditation.[38] In these individuals with "stabilized lucid dreaming," dream consciousness can become conflated with ordinary waking, with visions of diffuse white light and geometric imagery such as mandalas experienced in both sleep and waking.[39]

Both lucid dreaming and sleep meditation are states primarily experienced on the borderline of wake and sleep. Practitioners attempting dream and sleep meditation begin their approach with imagery and intention in drowsy wake—the same process that is used to train others to access to that state. Wake meditators drift into states of sleep. Sleep meditators attempt to extend their meditative experience into sleep by concentrating on the cognitive processes of sleep onset. Some lucid dreamers can reverse that process, extending lucidity into waking. In lucid dreaming and sleep meditation, the dreamer approaches the cognitive borderline of waking perception and motor activity from within the isolation of sleep. The other conscious states of dreaming are on the other side of that line, outside the limits of perceptual experience and conscious control. They take place fully within sleep.

Other physiological correlations exist between these behaviorally lucid states. Electrophysiologically, both focused meditation and lucid dreaming are associated with high levels of alpha and beta/gamma frequencies that are in turn linked with increased dream recall and cognitive binding.[40] Experienced mediators sometimes demonstrate changes in the ratios of synchronous EEG frequency activity in the wake state even while no longer meditating.[41]

Summary: Viewing Lucid Dreaming as Sleep-Associated Meditation

Historically, lucid dreaming was first described as part of the process used to induce dream and sleep meditation. The capacity for lucid dreaming was developed as part of a meditative process that was taught to the acolytes involved in discrete religious traditions. It is only recently that this process has been subjected to the technologies of modern science. The results

obtained from that technical analysis are affected by the methodology required. It is very likely that the requirement for sleep offset, rather than the cognitive process of lucid dreaming, produces the cognitive activity seen on fMRI and quantitative EEG associated with lucid dreaming with signaling.

For thousands of years, lucid dreaming has been the topic of cognitive exploration and analysis as part of the process used to induce sleep meditation. While lucid dreaming is most often viewed as a recently developed process of dream control, it is disingenuous to ignore the historic meditative basis for the state of lucid dreaming. Lucid dreaming shares more behavioral and physiologic characteristics with sleep meditation than with any other cognitive state. Lucidity may be best viewed as a trainable meditative-like state that, unlike most other forms of meditation, is developed and elaborated while in the state of sleep.[42]

While there are individuals such as Nietzsche who experience lucid dreaming "de novo" and without training, it is more common for lucid dreamers to attempt and learn this cognitive capacity either from a teacher or from literature. Lucid dreaming and sleep meditation are the only conscious states occurring in sleep that can be taught. From the perspective of the sleep laboratory, it was initially thought that the scientific analysis of this state would allow for the elucidation of the neural constructs involved in REM sleep dreaming. The attempts to analyze this state using modern technology have shown otherwise, and further laboratory analysis of the lucid state with signaling is most likely to prove useful in the analysis of the cognitive systems involved in consciously controlled sleep offset and onset. Laboratory lucid dreaming with signaling is a potentially useful tool that can be applied to expand our medical and behavioral understanding of insomnia—a complaint and diagnosis negatively affecting the health and functioning of more than 14 percent of the population.[43]

Viewing lucid dreaming as a form of sleep-associated meditation expands our understanding of both the importance and the potential use of this state. Lucid dreaming, rather than being merely a side effect of REM sleep, is an historical cognitive process used within religious traditions as a personal approach to focus and control the mind. For Buddhist monks, attaining a state of stabilized lucidity can expand their ability to integrate states of sleeping consciousness with waking. That capacity, viewed from within the concepts of their religious tradition, is an important part of the "Greatest Perfection"

path toward enlightenment. The capability for lucid dreaming, viewed from within the context of our modern world, has the capacity to enlighten our understanding of both meditative states and the forms of dream consciousness.

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5

The Science of Lucid Dream Induction

Tadas Stumbrys

Daniel Erlacher

Can Lucid Dreaming Be Learned?

Lucid dreaming—the ability to be aware of the dream while dreaming—is quite rare. Estimates of lucid dreaming incidence within the general population suggest that about 50 percent of people experience a lucid dream at least once in their lifetime and about 20 percent have lucid dreams regularly—once a month or more often.[1] Yet there are very few people who experience lucid dreams very frequently—only 1 percent of a representative German sample reported that they have lucid dreams several times per week.[2]

Some differences across cultures also seem to exist. For example, Erlacher et al. found significantly lower incidence of lucid dreaming in a Japanese student sample in comparison with samples from other countries.[3] Further, only 26 percent of the respondents in a representative Austrian sample reported having lucid dreams.[4] Yet in some specific samples, the frequency of lucid dreaming can be markedly higher. Michael Schredl and Daniel Erlacher, for example, in a student sample found that 82 percent of the participants had lucid dreams at least once, while 37 percent were frequent lucid dreamers (with a frequency of once a month or more).[5] Yet the number of very frequent lucid dreamers (having several lucid dreams per week) was still very low—only 2.5 percent.

This raises important questions: Can lucid dreaming be learned? Can lucid dreams be induced? Which technique works best? What are the best protocols for research? How can lucid dreams be induced at home? These questions are crucial both to foster lucid dream scientific research and to make lucid dreams available to a wider audience.

Since the onset of scientific lucid dream research, it has been demonstrated that lucid dreaming is learnable—that is, it is possible to increase the frequency of lucid dreaming by applying some particular techniques (see Figure 5.1). Stephen LaBerge refers to lucid dreaming as a skill,[6] yet skills are something that can be learned and, once mastered, they remain quite stable. For example, we usually do not unlearn how to ride a bike—yet trained lucid dreaming can be unlearned. In his personal case study, Schredl demonstrated that once he stopped practicing a lucid dream induction technique, his lucid dream frequency dropped to the baseline levels. A similar decrease was also noted by LaBerge once he discontinued practice (Phase III in Figure 5.1). Therefore lucid dreaming perhaps should be better considered not as a skill, but as an ability or a more innate individual capacity, like strength or endurance, that could be improved by training, but would decrease if training is discontinued. Research on individual differences between lucid dreamers and nonlucid dreamers supports this notion. People who lucid dream often are distinguished by a number of personality characteristics, such as greater openness to experience, more internal locus of control, higher need for cognition, and field independence.[7]

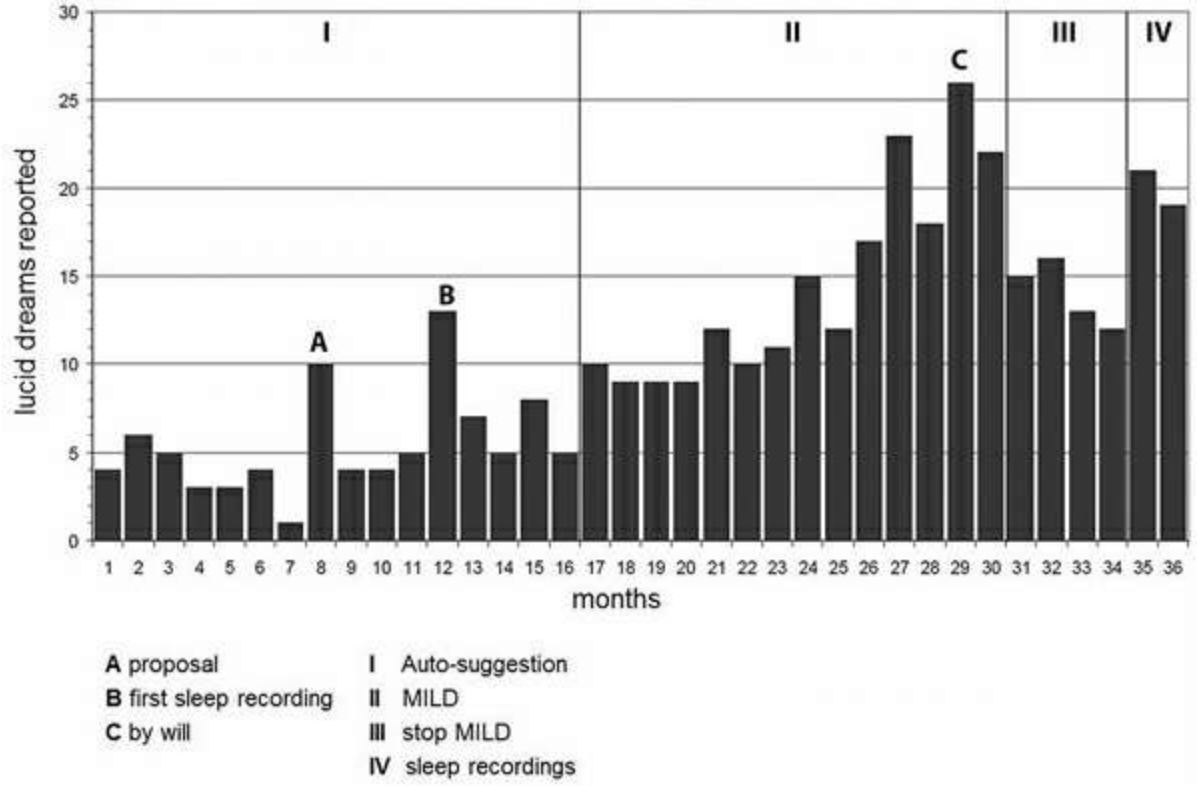

Figure 5.1.

Monthly rate of lucid dreaming reported by LaBerge during the 3-year experimental period. During the first 16 months (I), lucid dreams were induced by auto-suggestion. In the months (A) and (B), the increased frequency of lucid dreams was associated with enhanced motivation due to the preparation of a dissertation proposal and first sleep recordings. During the next period (II), the subject developed the mnemonic method for induction of lucid dreams (MILD; see the description in the text). By the last 2 months of this phase (C), he was able to induce lucid dreams at will. For the next 4 months (III), he discontinued regular practice of MILD. During the last 2 months (IV), the subject used MILD to produce lucid dreams for polysomnographic recordings

(adapted from LaBerge 1980, p. 1040).

LaBerge, who presented his own case study over a three-year period for his dissertation, also reports a history of lucid dreams from the early age. He appears to be one of those people who have an innate lucid dreaming ability. But how about those people who do not have lucid dreams naturally—can lucid dreaming not only be improved, but also be acquired?

Recently, we conducted a survey on the phenomenology of lucid dreaming.[8] We used the term "lucid dream phenomenology" to refer to different aspects of the lucid dream experience, such as the duration of lucid dreams, active versus passive attitude to accomplish actions in lucid dreams, abilities to remember waking intentions planned for lucid dreams and to successfully execute them, and so on. We asked our participants (571 of whom were lucid dreamers) how their lucid dreams started. For most participants (83.4 percent), lucid dreams started spontaneously; however, 15.1 percent of the respondents reported that they learned lucid dreaming by deliberate training. We looked into the lucid dreaming differences between these two groups. While learned lucid dreamers had somewhat shorter lucid dreams (8.3 minutes on average) than natural lucid dreamers (15.0 minutes), their lucid dream frequency was approximately the same. This suggests that lucid dreaming can be successfully learned even by those people who never had a lucid dream in the past. Further, we found learned lucid dreamers to be more active, more likely to try things in their lucid dreams, and more successful at remembering their waking intentions in lucid dreams than natural lucid dreamers. The strongest predictor of all lucid dream phenomenology was the frequency of lucid dreams. More-frequent lucid dreamers had longer lucid dreams. They were also more likely to try waking intentions in their lucid dreams, could better remember them, and were more likely to successfully accomplish them. Therefore lucid dreaming seems to be an ability that could be successfully acquired and mastered.

Nonlucid dreamers often ask if lucid dreaming can be learned by anyone. Unfortunately, it is difficult to answer the question in this form. Imagine we have a promising lucid dream induction method that we test with 10 people who never experienced such a dream before. We start an intervention over a week in which our participants have to follow the instructions of the technique; at the same time, they are asked to record their dreams and lucid dreams in a protocol. After a week of the intervention, seven participants were successful and had a lucid dream. Are the other three unable to have lucid dreams? Probably not. Maybe they simply need an extra week, a different induction technique, or just greater motivation. However, when talking about induction techniques, we can only discuss their effectiveness and success rates. So what are those methods that can help to induce lucid dreams?

How Can Lucid Dreams Be Induced?

By the term "lucid dream induction," we refer to any means that aim to increase the frequency of lucid dreams. Since the onset of lucid dream research, induction has always been a pertinent question. A plethora of various techniques have been suggested in the literature. Some of those methods were based on personal and anecdotal accounts, while some of them were tested in carefully designed scientific experiments.

Paul Tholey, a German pioneer in lucid dream research, was one of the first to provide detailed descriptions of different induction techniques.[9] He separated induction methods into two groups: (1) techniques for achieving lucidity and (2) techniques for retaining lucidity. Techniques in the first category, which include reflection, intention, auto-suggestion, and their combination, help the dreamer to realize that he is dreaming. Techniques from the second category (e.g., focusing on hypnagogic imagery or own body image) make it possible for the dreamer to remain conscious while falling asleep. Tholey also mentions additional techniques—for example, those that involve apparatus, such as acoustic or tactile stimuli transmitted while a person is falling asleep or while sleeping.

Similarly to Tholey, LaBerge and Rheingold separated the two types of lucid dreams and their induction methods by referring to DILD (dream-

initiated lucid dreaming—"waking up in the dream world") and WILD (wake-initiated lucid dreaming—"falling asleep consciously").[10] Their DILD methods category also involves *psychotechnologies*, such as providing an acoustic, tactile, or light cue to a dreamer while she is in rapid eye movement (REM) sleep.

Another effort to classify different induction methods was proposed by Jayne Gackenbach, who grouped them into two broad categories: (1) presleep induction and (2) sleep induction.[11] The first category, presleep induction, includes intentional techniques and unintentional considerations. Intentional techniques focus either on the present moment (e.g., reflecting whether one is dreaming right now) or on the future (e.g., auto-suggestion). Unintentional considerations include situations during the day (e.g., interpersonal interactions) and individual propensities (e.g., field independence) that are not directly related to the attainment of dream lucidity but increase the likelihood of having a lucid dream. Gackenbach's second category, sleep induction, is divided into external cues and internal cues. External clues are various environmental stimuli (e.g., auditory) that can be applied during REM sleep to be incorporated into a dream and recognized as a cue by the dreamer. Internal cues can be unusual events or inconsistencies within a dream, a sense of "dreamlikeness,'' or just a spontaneous insight occurring in a dream that leads to the awareness that one is dreaming.

Further classification was suggested by Price and Cohen, who separated induction methods into three classes: (1) lucid-awareness training, (2) intention and suggestion techniques, and (3) "REM-minding" techniques.[12] Lucid-awareness training aims to cultivate a proper waking attitude to promote lucidity, such as critically reflecting on a frequent basis whether one is dreaming. Intention and suggestion techniques aspire to trigger a lucid dream through an act of will or suggestion. "REM-minding," the third class, resembles Gackenbach's external cues category and includes tactile, auditory, and other external stimuli presented during REM sleep to trigger lucidity.

Although these classification systems were useful, they seemed to be somewhat fragmentary and many included techniques based on personal or anecdotal accounts without any empirical validation. To get a comprehensive picture of different induction techniques and their effectiveness, recently we carried out an extensive systematic review of published evidence on lucid dream induction.[13] We looked into both electronic bibliographic databases

(e.g., MEDLINE, PsycINFO) and specific resources, including (lucid) dream research journals (e.g., *Lucidity Letter*, *NightLight*), references in relevant articles, and other sources such as personal collections. We identified and included in the review 37 manuscripts that reported 35 induction studies. Of those studies, 11 were held in a sleep laboratory and 24 were conducted as field experiments. We grouped all methods into three broad categories: (1) cognitive techniques, (2) external stimulation, and (3) miscellaneous techniques. Table 5.1 presents our comparison of all classifications.

Cognitive Techniques

Our category of cognitive techniques encompasses all mental activities that are carried out to increase the likelihood of achieving lucidity in a dream state. Cognitive techniques are the most popular method used for lucid dream induction—our induction review found that cognitive techniques were employed in 77 percent of lucid dream induction studies (27 studies in total). Cognitive techniques can be divided into DILD and WILD methods, in accordance with a suggestion by LaBerge and Rheingold, as these two categories represent different approaches in initiation of lucid dreams. With the former, the lucid dream is initiated from within a dream—in other words, a person becomes lucid during a dream. With the latter, the lucid dream is initiated from wakefulness—in other words, a person retains conscious awareness when falling asleep and directly enters (or reenters) the dream state.

Within DILD techniques, the mnemonic induction of lucid dreams (MILD) has the most empirical support and has been aptly demonstrated to be effective.[14] Based on prospective memory training and applied upon awakening from the dream, the technique involves the dreamer rehearsing the dream and visualizing becoming lucid in it. At the same time she has to tell to herself: "Next time I'm dreaming, I want to remember I'm dreaming" (see also Box 5.1).

Another effective DILD technique is *reflection* or the reality testing technique, which involves asking oneself regularly during the day whether one is dreaming while examining the environment for possible incongruences.[15] Reflection is based on the continuity hypothesis developed by Schredl (2003), which states that waking experiences are reflected in dreams. Thus reality testing in wakefulness can be transferred to dreams and

serve as a trigger for lucid dreaming. Lucid dreams can also be successfully triggered by *intention*—specifically, by imagining oneself before falling asleep as being in a dream situation and recognizing the dream.[16] This method can be especially useful for nightmare sufferers who have recurrent nightmare scenarios. Once recognized, the nightmare scenario can be changed into a more pleasant one.

Table 5.1 Classifications of Lucid Dream Induction Techniques

Tholey 1983	**Gackenbach 1985–1986**	**Price and Cohen 1988**	**LaBerge and Rheingold 1990**	**Stumbrys et al. 2012**
	Presleep induction: unintentional considerations			
Techniques for retaining lucidity			Falling asleep consciously (WILD)	Cognitive techniques
Techniques for achieving lucidity	Presleep induction: intentional techniques (present-focused)	Lucid awareness training	Waking up in the dream world (DILD)	
Presleep induction: intentional techniques (future-focused)	Intention and suggestion techniques			
	Sleep induction - Internal cues			
Additional techniques (involving apparatus)	Sleep induction: external cues	Cue REM-minding	External stimulation	
				Miscellaneous

Another method is *auto-suggestion*, in which a person suggests to himself to have a lucid dream while being in a relaxed state before falling asleep. This technique might be effective, yet evidence supporting it is inconclusive.

A combination of all three aforementioned methods, Tholey's so-called *combined technique*, can also be very effective.[17] Further, some evidence suggest that a post-hypnotic suggestion (given by a hypnotherapist to a person who is in a trance) can induce lucid dreams, yet overall the findings are at odds with this supposition.[18] There has also been an effort to use biofeedback—in particular, electroencephalography (EEG) alpha training—for lucid dream induction, but without any success.[19]

Box 5.1 Mnemonic Induction of Lucid Dreams (MILD) Technique*

A. *Focus your intent*. While returning to sleep, focus on your intention to remember to recognize when you are dreaming. Tell yourself sincerely, "The next time I'm dreaming, I will remember to notice I'm dreaming." Keep your thoughts on this idea. Let go of the irrelevant thoughts and gently guide your focus back to your intention to become lucid. As you repeat your intention, also practice Step B.

B. *See yourself becoming lucid*. While maintaining your thoughts on the intention to remember to notice when you're dreaming, imagine that you are back in a recent dream (one from last night is best), and that you realize you are dreaming in it. Look for a dreamsign in your memory of the dream. When you see one, say to yourself, "I'm dreaming!" and continue your fantasy. Picture yourself carrying out your plans for your next lucid dream. For example, if you want to fly in your next lucid dream, see yourself taking off and soaring when you come to the point in your fantasy where you become lucid.

C. *Repeat*. Repeat the above until your intention is clearly set, and you feel a sense of confidence that you can become lucid in your next dream. If your mind wanders as you drift off to sleep, repeat the exercise, so that the last thing in your mind before you fall asleep is your intention to remember to recognize the next time you are dreaming.

*Modified version (LaBerge, Phillips, and Levitan 1994).

So far, only one study has tested WILD techniques.[20] Two focusing methods were applied to enter the dream state directly from a short awakening after a dream, involving either a focus on counting or on the body image while falling asleep. Both showed some success, but these findings are yet to be replicated. Empirically untested WILD methods also include focusing on hypnagogic imagery while falling asleep or doing active visualization.[21]

External Stimulation

This category includes all types of external stimuli presented during REM sleep that can trigger dream lucidity. A few different approaches could be used. First, an external stimulus might be presented as a cue that could be incorporated in the dream and then recognized by the dreamer. The greatest success has been achieved with light stimuli,[22] which seems effective in inducing lucid dreams. Several commercially available devices have since been constructed (e.g., DreamLight, DreamLink, NovaDreamer; see Figure 5.2). These devices have sensors that can detect REM sleep and can produce light flashes upon its detection. Therefore they could be successfully applied even in the home setting. Acoustic stimuli (such as a voice saying "This is a dream," a musical tone, or a buzzer noise) have also been applied with some success in a few studies, but the evidence is inconclusive.[23] Tactile stimuli, such as vibration[24] or electric impulses,[25] have shown to be effective in single studies, but warrant further replication. One study tried to employ water stimulus (splashing on the face or hand of participants), but without any effect on dream lucidity.[26]

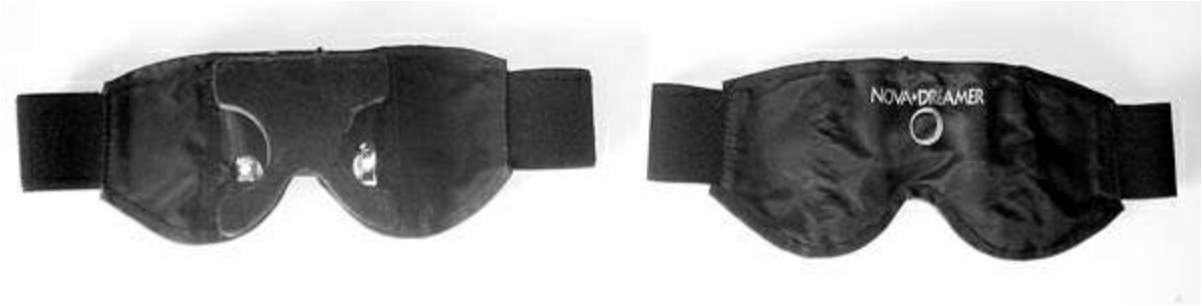

Figure 5.2.
Sleep mask that is able to detect REM sleep and produce flashes of red light upon its detection (NovaDreamer).

Another approach is vestibular stimulation, based on an observed association between the vestibular system and lucid dreaming.[27] In one study, the participants were rocked during REM sleep at a constant frequency while sleeping in a hammock; this practice resulted in increased dream reflectiveness.[28] However, the findings were not conclusive and need to be replicated. Further, it has been proposed that galvanic vestibular stimulation (GVS) can be used to stimulate the vestibular system directly in the inner ear.[29]

Finally, it might be possible to stimulate the brain—that is, increase the cortical excitability of the brain areas that seem to be linked to lucid dreaming, such as the prefrontal cortex or the precuneus.[30] We recently did a study in which transcranial direct current stimulation (tDCS) was applied over the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (DLPFC) during REM sleep; this technique resulted in increased lucidity, but the effects were observed only in frequent lucid dreamers.[31] Higher intensities and other brain regions might be tested in future studies, as well as more precise technologies such as transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS).[32]

Miscellaneous Techniques

In the miscellaneous category, we include all other induction methods that were not covered by cognitive techniques and external stimulation. First, drugs can purportedly enhance lucid dreaming. One study administered an acetylcholine esterase inhibitor (AChEI) known as donepezil (Aricept).[33] Two doses of donepezil (5 mg and 10 mg) were used as well in a control placebo condition. When they received donepezil, nine out of 10 participants reported one or more lucid dreams in two nights, while only one participant reported a lucid dream on the control placebo night. The higher dose was associated with stronger effects, but seemed to provide some adverse effects (mild insomnia and gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea and vomiting). Other AChEI drugs, such as galantamine, rivastigmin, and huperzine, as well as a possible precursor to acetylcholine (DMAE) have also been suggested as substances that can enhance lucidity in dreams.[34]

Further, in this category we include the wake-up-back-to-bed (WBTB) method, in which a person goes back to bed and takes a nap after a certain period of awakening (e.g., 30–120 minutes) during the early morning hours.[35] Although WBTB has been empirically tested only in combination with MILD, it seems to be a method for facilitating lucidity on its own and might be successfully applied in combination with other induction techniques.

Given the existence of a great variety of lucid dream induction methods, of which some are more successful than others, a natural question raises: which technique works best?

Which Technique Works Best?

Let us now return to our imagined experiment from the beginning of the chapter: what is the effectiveness of each specific induction method? To answer this question, the exact study procedures employed are of utmost importance. If a procedure is somewhat different—for example, if the induction technique is applied at a different time or for different duration—the effectiveness level might also vary.

With this in mind, one of the core findings of our 2012 systematic review was that "none of induction techniques were verified to induce lucid dreams reliably, consistently and with a high success rate."[36] Yet some methods do appear to be promising. Looking into the empirical evidence gathered to date, one of the most successful approaches seems to be the combination of MILD and WBTB techniques.

The MILD technique (see Box 5.1) was developed by Stephen LaBerge (1980) when working on his doctoral dissertation. At the baseline, when no induction techniques were used, LaBerge had less than 1 lucid dream per month. Then he applied auto-suggestion, resulting in a range of 1 to 13 lucid dreams per month (5.6 on average) and up to 2 lucid dreams per night. Further, when he developed MILD, his lucid dreams frequency increased to 18 to 26 lucid dreams per month (21.5 on average) and up to 4 lucid dreams per night (see Figure 5.1).

LaBerge also did a study with 49 participants who attended eight weekly group meetings. His participants used two cognitive techniques—MILD and reality testing—and on some nights also had access to DreamLight devices, which produce light stimuli during REM sleep. Their baseline lucid dream rate was 3.7 percent. When the MILD technique was applied, this frequency increased to 13 percent. If the DreamLight device was used in addition to MILD, the lucid dream rate increased to 20 percent. When the DreamLight device was used without MILD, the rate of lucid dreaming was only 5.5 percent. There was a small but significant correlation between the frequency of MILD practice and lucid dream rate ($r = 0.124$, $p < 0.003$), yet no such relation was found for reality testing practice ($r = 0.036$, $p < 0.24$).[37]

In another study with 62 lucid dreamers, Lynne Levitan compared their baseline lucid dream rate with three techniques (each was practiced for a week): MILD, reality testing, and auto-suggestion.[38] In the baseline week, 20 percent of participants had lucid dreams (on average, 0.21 lucid dream per week). The same rate persisted when auto-suggestion was employed (19.5

percent; 0.21), but was higher when MILD (26.3 percent; 0.37) or reality testing (29.1 percent; 0.53) was practiced. These findings suggest that both MILD and reality testing could be indeed effective in increasing the frequency of lucid dreams, yet the question still remains when these techniques are most effective.

To tackle this question, Levitan did a study with 10 lucid dreamers, in which the WBTB method with two conditions was employed: the participants were asked to wake up 2 hours earlier than usual and take a nap after 2 hours or to wake up 4 hours earlier and take a nap after 4 hours.[39] In the first part of the night (before awakening), only about 10 percent of dreams were lucid (9 lucid dreams were reported in total); by comparison, the percentage of lucid dreams during naps was about 40 percent (25 lucid dreams reported). A nap after 2 hours seemed to be more efficient than a nap after 4 hours (50 percent versus 33 percent lucid dreams, respectively). When using WBTB plus MILD, Edelstein and LaBerge also found a much higher frequency of lucid dreams during the naps in comparison to the night before awakening. Within their sample of 18 lucid dreamers, lucid dreams occurred during 8 percent of the nights (6 percent of reported dreams were lucid) and 37 percent of the naps (20 percent of dreams were lucid).[40]

In a further experiment, Levitan tested whether the time and duration of awakening play a role in increasing chances for lucidity.[41] Twelve lucid dreamers tried three different sleep schedules, one night each: (1) wake up 90 minutes earlier, stay awake for 90 minutes, do MILD, and have a 90-minute nap; (2) wake up 90 minutes earlier, do MILD, and have a 90-minute nap; and (3) wake up as usual, do MILD, and have a 90-minute nap. In the first condition, 9 participants had lucid dreams (8 during the nap, 1 at night), while only 4 participants were lucid (all during the nap) in the second condition and only 3 were lucid (1 during the nap, 2 at night) in the third. This suggests that both earlier awakening and a certain period of wakefulness before a nap may contribute to increased lucidity. Yet the further question arises regarding the optimal duration of the WBTB period for lucid dreaming.

Levitan et al. compared morning and afternoon naps in a study with 22 lucid dreamers.[42] For a morning nap, the same condition as the first one in a previous experiment was used: wake up 90 minutes earlier, stay awake for 90 minutes, do MILD, and have a 90-minute nap. For an afternoon nap, the participants were instructed to go to bed 14 to 17 hours after a regular

bedtime, do MILD, and have a 90-minute nap. Whereas in the night before the nap only 4 percent of dreams were lucid (6 lucid dreams in total), 33 percent of the nap dreams were lucid (27 in total). A morning nap seemed to be more favorable than an afternoon nap for producing lucid dreaming (42 percent versus 12 percent).

Finally, LaBerge et al. tested three different nap durations within a sample of 22 lucid dreamers: (1) going 50 minutes later to bed, awakening 10 minutes earlier, reading about lucid dreams and doing MILD for 10 minutes, and then having a nap for 90 minutes; (2) going 30 minutes later to bed, awakening 30 minutes earlier, reading about lucid dreams and doing MILD for 30 minutes, and then having a nap for 90 minutes; and (3) going at a regular time to bed, awakening 60 minutes earlier, reading about lucid dreams and doing MILD for 60 minutes, and then having a nap for 90 minutes. Before the study, on average the participants had 1 lucid dream in 7 nights. Within the first condition, lucid dream rate was even lower—1 lucid dream in 11 nights (5 lucid dreams in total were reported). However, this rate was markedly higher for other two conditions: 1 lucid dream in 2 nights (20 lucid dreams in total) for the second condition and 1 lucid dream in 1.6 nights for the third condition (25 in total). In this study, 27 percent of nap dreams were lucid, compared to only 1.3 percent of night dreams.[43]

Thus, the series of experiments conducted by LaBerge, Levitan, and their colleagues suggest that MILD is effective in inducing lucid dreams, especially when the WBTB method is used. The optimal time for WBTB is approximately 30 to 120 minutes. The shorter durations, such as taking a nap after 10 minutes or immediately after awakening, as well as the longer durations, such as taking a nap after 4 hours or after 14 to 17 hours in the afternoon, appear to be less effective. Note, however, that all of these studies were conducted as field experiments and used only skilled lucid dreamers as their participants.

We extended these researchers' findings by conducting a series of experiments in the sleep laboratory with polysomnographic recording (PSG) and with people who were not selected based on their lucid dream abilities.[44] In the first experiment, 11 sports students, who attended a seminar on sleep and dreams, spent a single night in a sleep laboratory. After 6 hours of sleep, they were awakened from a subsequent REM period and kept awake for 1 hour, during which they were asked to do some dreamwork and then practice

MILD. Dreamwork may include writing down their dreams and looking for *dreamsigns*, or recurrent dream situations, environments, people, and objects that can trigger lucidity in future dreams.[45] The participants then returned to bed for a nap. The participants were instructed to produce a left–right–left–right (LRLR) eye signal upon achieving lucidity in the dream. Six participants (54 percent) reported a lucid dream during the nap and all dreams were verified to be lucid by an external judge who scored dream reports. Four participants were reported to produce a LRLR signal and 3 signals were verified on the PSG recording to occur during unambiguous REM sleep (27 percent).

To avoid biases due to the seminar attendance (which could indicate greater interest or higher motivation), exactly the same procedure was replicated in the second experiment with 15 participants who did not attend the seminar. The success rate was comparable: 8 participants reported lucid dreams (53 percent) that were verified by an external judge, and 6 were reported to produce LRLR signals, of which 4 (27 percent) were verified on the PSG recording. Further, in the third experiment, 14 sports students accomplished the same procedure but with a shorter awakening period (approximately 40 minutes instead of 1 hour). In this condition, 5 participants (36 percent) reported lucid dreams and 2 reported LRLR signals (14 percent) (all verified).

Finally, in the fourth experiment, we tested whether the activity that is carried out during the period of awakening is important. In this study, 11 sports students spent two nonconsecutive nights in a sleep laboratory. The same procedure as in the first and second experiments was used, except that instead of doing dreamwork, on one night the participants read a book (fiction, unrelated to dreams), while on the other night they played a Wii video game involving a balancing exercise (links between dream lucidity and vestibular activity were demonstrated in previous research[46]). The order of nights was counterbalanced. In the reading condition, only one (9 percent) participant reported lucid dreams and no eye movements. No lucid dreams were identified in the Wii condition.

Our research, therefore, suggests that for lucid dream induction it is most effective to use MILD in early morning hours with 60 minutes of WBTB, during which time dream-related activities are carried out (Figure 5.3). In such condition, about a half of students were able to have a lucid dream and

about one fourth produced a LRLR signal that could be verified to occur during unambiguous REM sleep on the PSG recording.

While the evidence for WBTB and MILD is strongest, it is possible that other cognitive techniques (such as Tholey's combined technique) could also be successfully used with WBTB. Research into this possibility remains to be conducted. Further, as a study by LaBerge suggests, using a light stimuli-emitting device in addition to these techniques might increase the chances for lucidity even more.[47] AChEI drugs, such as donepezil, galantamine, and rivastigmine, might be another effective add-on, although more rigorous research is needed to prove this connection. While the only reported study on AChEIs and lucid dreaming showed a great success rate (9 out of 10 participants reported lucid dreams on donepezil nights, compared with only 1 out of 10 on a placebo night), it was conducted only as a field research.[48] Without properly designed clinical trials, such substances, which are prescription-only drugs in many countries, cannot be recommended as an add-on for lucid dream induction at this time.

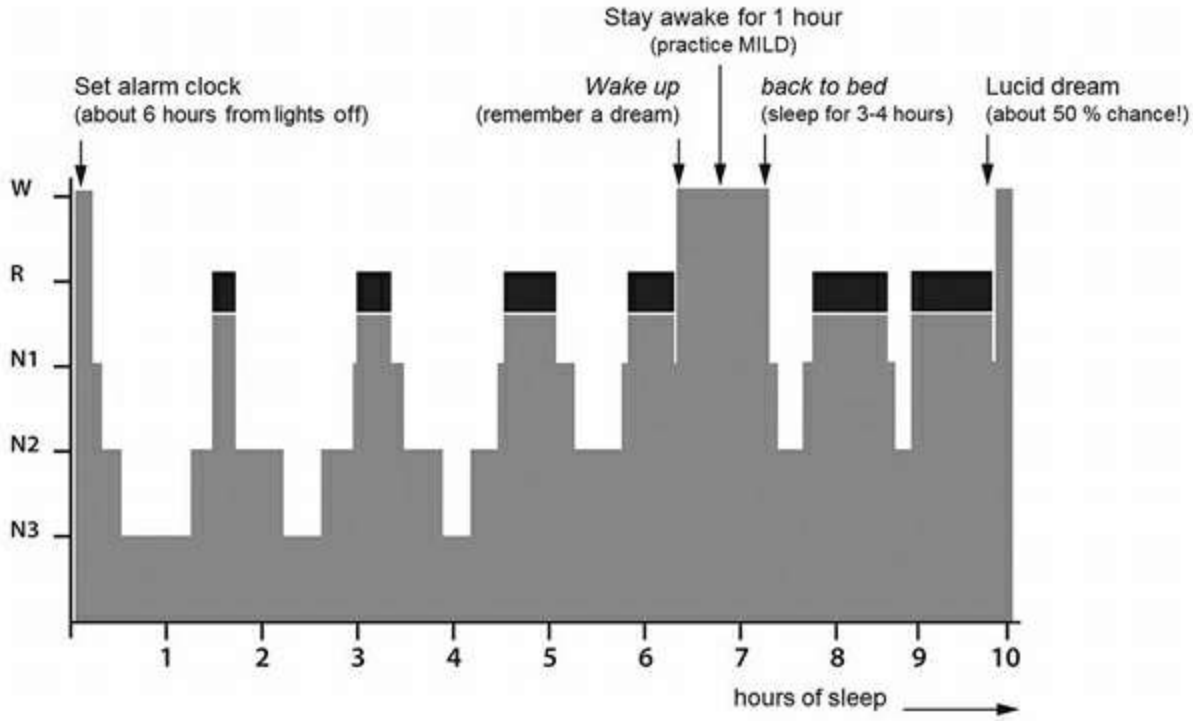

Figure 5.3.
The most effective lucid dream induction procedure according to our research (Erlacher and Stumbrys).

Challenges and Unknowns for Lucid Dreaming Induction

The interest of researchers in lucid dream induction is twofold. First, lucid dream induction is a pertinent question in itself. The availability of effective induction methods will open lucid dreaming to a wider audience and will greatly foster both public interest and scientific research. Consequently, it is important to test the effectiveness of all promising lucid dream induction methods and to establish the conditions in which they are most effective (e.g., time, duration of practice). Second, researchers always struggle to find participants for sleep laboratory experiments on lucid dreams, in which the participants have to accomplish precise actions in lucid dreams. Lucid dreamers might be asked, for example, to count or to perform squats or hand clenching; during this activity, physiological parameters or time can be measured. Due to the difficulties in finding proficient lucid dreamers, such studies always have small sample sizes, which often affect the interpretability of their results. If effective induction techniques would be available, the recruitment of participants for such studies will no longer be an issue for lucid dream researchers.

Lucid dream induction research is associated with a number of methodological challenges. The first is what to consider a valid criterion for successful induction. Field studies are based only on subjective ratings of the participants. While validity might be increased by employing external blind judges to score their dream reports for lucidity, such studies would still lack an objective validation that a lucid dream has really occurred. In contrast to field studies, sleep laboratory experiments have a greater validity, as lucidity and actions in dreams can be marked by prearranged LRLR eye signals, giving an objective physiological validation. However, this opens a whole range of ambiguous scenarios. For example, the LRLR signal might be present on the sleep recording, but upon awakening the participant might have no recollection of the dream. Or the opposite might occur: upon awakening a lucid dream is reported, but no LRLR signal is visible. Or perhaps both are present—a lucid dream reported and a LRLR signal visible—but the sleep stage is not REM or is ambiguous REM (e.g., with a high EEG alpha or an increased EMG tone). While lucid dreaming is considered to

be mainly an REM sleep phenomenon, lucidity during non-REM (NREM) sleep is also possible.[49] This raises a question about the whole notion of "dream lucidity"—how far it can be extended? Only to NREM sleep? Or also to hypnogogic and hypnopompic phenomena occurring at the boundary between sleep and wakefulness? Or maybe to other dreamlike states such as meditation, hypnosis, or drug intoxication? If the notion is extended too far, there is a risk that the term "lucid dreaming" itself will become diluted and overly abstracted. Therefore, as we have suggested, it might be useful to talk separately about "REM lucidity" (or "REM lucid dreaming") and "NREM lucidity."

Further, lucidity itself is not an "all-or-nothing" phenomenon in which the dreamer either knows that he is dreaming and is lucid or does not realize this and, therefore, is not lucid. Rather, there seem to be different degrees of lucidity within dreams, such that in some dreams a person might be more lucid than in others, suggesting a continuum of dream lucidity.[50] Different degrees of lucidity usually are not taken into account during induction studies and the instruments to measure lucidity in dreams are either over-simplified or over-complicated.

Applying the various induction methods is also quite complicated. For cognitive techniques, there is always a question of *when* and *for how long* (or *how often*, in a case, for example, of reality testing) they should be applied. For external stimulation, there is always a question of stimulation intensity. If the stimulus is too strong, the person will be awakened. If it is too weak, the stimulus might not reach the dream world (i.e., it might not be incorporated in a dream) or might not elicit sufficient brain or vestibular activation. One solution is to use an adaptation night or first REM periods to establish the awakening thresholds for stimulation intensity (e.g., by providing stimuli with an increasing intensity up to the point that the person is awakened). Subsequently, stimulation intensities slightly below the awakening threshold might be used. Even so, there is no guarantee that the stimulus will be incorporated into the dream and it is impossible to predict *how* it will be incorporated (e.g., a light stimulus might be incorporated as sunlight or a traffic light). With drug application, the dosage is even more crucial. Different doses might have not only different desirable effects, but also different undesirable (adverse) effects. Ethical approval and carefully designed clinical trials are essential to conduct such research. Not only short-term adverse effects but also long-term effects should be explored, including

the potential for developing tolerance after regular use.

Another important aspect that has not yet been systematically researched is the unlearning of lucid dreaming. According to a recent case study of Schredl and also a case presented by LaBerge, lucid dreaming frequency might decrease markedly once induction techniques are no longer employed.[51] Given this possibility, it is important to consider not only the effectiveness of a particular technique, but also the durability of its effects.

In our systematic review, we found that many lucid dream induction studies suffered from poor methodological quality.[52] One of the biggest problems was poor reportability. Exact procedures, precise descriptions of the techniques employed, and detailed results including estimates of the random variability are not always clearly described. Internal validity, such as compliance with the study procedure in field studies or validity and reliability of outcome measures (e.g., using only subjective ratings of lucidity), was another issue. Field studies may apply some compliance checks or use external judges to score dream reports, yet still lack some internal validity as compared to sleep laboratory experiments. Further, external validity was also an issue. Participants in most of the studies were self-selected lucid dreamers or university students, which makes it difficult to generalize the findings. To increase external validity, researchers could, for example, conduct the same induction study with different groups of participants.

Finally, we found overall trends regarding the number of lucid dream induction studies quite alarming. Out of 37 manuscripts included in this review, 2 were published in the 1970s, 16 in the 1980s, 15 in the 1990s, and only 4 in the 2000s. After the “golden age” of lucid dream research in the 1980s and 1990s, the scientific interest in lucid dream induction seems to have declined dramatically. We hope that increasing public interest in lucid dreaming (generated, for example, by the recent Hollywood blockbuster film *Inception*) and the active online communities of lucid dreamers in which people share their experiences and tips for successful lucid dreaming might inspire researchers and yield a new generation of lucid dream induction techniques.

How to Induce Lucid Dreams at Home?

While lucid dream induction in a sleep laboratory setting is of interest only to a limited number of dream and consciousness researchers, induction of lucid dreams in a home setting is one of the most pertinent questions for everyone else interested in lucid dreaming. The two settings are quite different. In a sleep laboratory, researchers can awaken the participant from REM sleep to increase the chances for a dream to be recalled, which for young people might be as high as 96 percent. Thus, a person can have a dream to work with during the period of WBTB (journaling and identifying dreamsigns) and will be less likely to forget a lucid dream if one was had. Further, researchers can present various external stimuli while the person is in REM sleep. They can provide light, acoustic, or tactile stimuli, thereby stimulating the vestibular apparatus or the brain. Laboratory references in dreams, which are quite frequent in sleep laboratory studies, might serve as another trigger for dream lucidity—the dreamer, for example, might do a reality test each time she finds herself in the sleep laboratory surroundings during the night. Motivation in the sleep laboratory setting is also likely to be higher and the results might be better due to the "Hawthorne effect" (improved performance simply because the person knows that he is being studied).

The situation is rather different at home. Upon awakening, the dream may not have been recalled. When doing WBTB, the person can experience difficulties getting out of bed due to a strong desire to continue to sleep. External devices, such as lucid dream masks that can provide a light stimuli, are either quite expensive (e.g., NovaDreamer, REMDreamer) or cannot accurately detect REM sleep (such as the newly marketed Remee).

Which approaches can be most successfully used to induce lucid dreams in home settings? The first and foremost advice is to increase overall dream recall. The strong association between lucid dream frequency and overall dream recall frequency is one of the most robust findings in the field of lucid dream research, being consistently observed in a variety of samples—for example, German representative sample, $r = 0.57$ ($N = 919$)[53]; German athletes, $r = 0.32$ ($N = 840$)[54]; German students, $r = 0.32$ ($N = 444$)[55]; Japanese students, $r = 0.30$ ($N = 153$)[56]; and Austrian sample, $r = 0.39$ ($N = 89$).[57] This association is perhaps twofold. First, a person who remembers more dreams will remember more lucid dreams as well. Second, such a person will be better acquainted with personal dreamsigns.

Research has shown that dream recall can be markedly improved by

keeping a dream diary and being motivated.[58] Therefore the first prerequisite for lucid dreaming is starting to keep a dream journal, which is especially important for people with lower dream recall. This journal should be kept by the bed, so that a person can record a dream immediately after an awakening, as details of the dream might fade from memory in a very short time. If no dream can be recalled after awakening, the person is advised not to move, keep the eyes shut, and try to recall even a small fragment of what was just happening in her mind. Sometimes even a tiny fragment can bring the whole memory of the dream back. After writing down a dream, it is useful to reflect on possible missed dreamsigns—those situations in the dream that might have served as a trigger to lucidity (e.g., seeing a flying cat or meeting a deceased relative). Further, during the day it is advisable to practice reality testing (i.e., critically examine the environment for possible incongruences) on a regular basis. Once established, the habit of critical reflection will be transferred to dreams as well. Before falling asleep, it is useful to practice auto-suggestion by repeating to oneself firmly, "Tonight I will be lucid in my dream," while being in a relaxed state. Nightmare sufferers, especially those who have recurrent nightmares, can also benefit from setting a firm intention: "If I see that frightening situation again, I will become aware that I am dreaming." If a person has an opportunity for prolonged sleep, then WBTB is recommended in early morning hours with an awakening for 1 hour, during which time some dreamwork is to be held and MILD to be practiced. Alternatively, after awakening from a dream, WILD techniques (e.g., counting or focusing on the body image) can be immediately applied.

While some personal case studies and preliminary research suggest a range of drugs that can enhance lucidity in dreams, due to the absence of properly conducted clinical trials and their prescriptive nature, none of these agents can yet be recommended for safe use at home.[59] However, there might be some natural alternatives—for example, sage (*Salvia*). There is quite substantial evidence that both *Salvia officinalis* and *Salvia lavandulaefolia* (Spanish sage) have AChEI properties and, therefore, might be effective in enhancing lucid dreaming, although this relationship has not yet been tested empirically.[60]

If affordable, external devices can be tried. Finally, practices such as meditation can be useful. Previous research has demonstrated that meditators have more lucid dreams than nonmeditators and, in fact, the longer the

meditative practice, the greater the number of lucid dreams reported.[61] In the Tibetan dream yoga tradition, meditation is seen as a core technique for developing awareness in dreams.[62] While we do not know if meditation practice can be used as a direct technique for lucid dream induction (no such studies have been carried out as yet), meditation can contribute to dream lucidity at least indirectly and is a useful add-on to any lucid dream practice routine.

With an abundance of induction techniques available, many novices have great expectations about having their first lucid dreams straightaway. While some people might be successful after their very first trial (this was the case, for example, for one of the authors of the present chapter), for others much greater persistence and motivation might be needed (which was the case for the other author). The effort might be comparable to having a goal of running a marathon. It requires regular practice until a person can run 20 kilometers at a stretch, and if she does not train regularly, then the gained ability disappears again. It may not be easy to have the first lucid dream, but the results are rewarding. Some people might reach the destination after a week of training, whereas others may need to train for several months. As with running a marathon, at the beginning every person has his own predispositions that can affect the process. Ultimately, with the necessary perseverance, perhaps anyone can achieve lucidity in their dreams.

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6

Memory, Meaning, and Imagination in Lucid Dreams

Lee Irwin

Lucid dreaming is a fascinating and complex phenomenon that can be captured only partially by verbal descriptions. The construction of lucidity is an interpretative problem, as it is primarily a nonverbal condition whose manifestation does not require verbal explanations. However, the interpretive challenge is to give voice to a variety of theories so as to better illuminate the phenomena. As a scholar of comparative religions for more than 30 years, I have found that the conundrum of writing about transverbal phenomena (including such conditions as trance, visions, mystical encounters, and a wide range of paranormal perceptions) is that the lived phenomena are often subject to substitution by the limited concreteness of words. The strategy of articulating a theory of lucid dreaming requires a transduction to an alternative mode of consciousness, the verbal mode, with its attendant danger of misplaced concreteness as words become substitutions for mental states. Thus it seems highly relevant that researchers in the area also have expertise in the direct experience of the phenomena. The mediation between articulated research theory and actual direct perception is a crucial relationship that, in my mind, gives greater authenticity to the verbalized theory.

My own research and writing have sought to explore this problem though cross-disciplinary studies in dreaming, visionary experience, and the anthropology of spiritual development both in traditional indigenous cultures (Native American) and in a contemporary, personal sense.[1]

I will start by contextualizing my own experience with lucid dreaming, while noting that the following reflections are based primarily on my own participant encounters. I started keeping a record of “non-ordinary dreams” (NOD) in 1968 and have been recording such dreams to the present day; currently, this manuscript includes descriptions of only 60 lucid dreams.[2] I

would estimate that since beginning the dream journal, I have had on average one or two lucid dreams per month; thus I would say I have had close to 1,000 lucid dreams during the last 40 years, most of which are unrecorded. Ironically, I did not consider lucid dreaming to be very "non-ordinary," as I was familiar with such dreaming before I started the dream journal and my truly non-ordinary dreams seemed to be on a completely different scale than the typical lucid dream. The lucid dreams that I selectively recorded were based on a broad spectrum of consciousness transformations expressed through a variety of altered states within which "lucidity" was an incidental feature of interest. The focus of the dream journal centers on descriptions of transpersonal dreams and explicit types of non-ordinary phenomena that exhibit abilities or capacities not normatively part of my everyday life. Thus, to write about lucid dreaming, I find myself facing a philosophical challenge —the puzzle of how lucidity as a psychic quality reflects consciousness generally, and more specifically how lucidity functions within certain types of dreaming.[3] To put it simply, I perceive "lucid" awareness as a property of consciousness, not a special feature of a particular dream type. To define lucid dreaming as "knowing you are dreaming when you dream" tends to avoid the larger, more complex questions of how we define the very nature of lucidity and the role of lucidity in maintaining and developing a truly conscious awareness.

My approach to lucidity is to describe it as a quality of *reflexivity* that is foundational to consciousness. For example, being conscious requires that there is some quality of self-awareness that is both intimate with and distinct from moment-to-moment perception and sensation. I have sensations, perceptions, and reactions, and I am aware of having such; that is, a quality of lucidity accompanies or is intrinsic to my sensations and perceptions. This distinction allows me to designate "my" awareness, to discover a "self" that arises in and through perceptions as a reflexive source of action and reaction. I see lucidity as a contributing property of self—not as a source of substantive identity, but rather as a quality of consciousness that contributes to the development of a more robust sense of autonomy and selfhood. One way to describe this embodied consciousness is to delineate qualities of awareness that distinguish between types of perception; lucidity seems to reflect the impact of *attention* on the formative sense of identity as a dynamic process. In this sense, human development could be characterized as a process of increasing awareness that expands perceptual capacities based on

where we direct our attention, while also fostering a synthesis of those perceptions into more refined, sensitive characterological formations. As individuals become more sensitive in perceiving the world and all of its nuances, they also heighten their capacity to bring greater reflexivity (as self-reflection) to what they perceive. An example of this would be bringing "lucidity" to a dream; as dreamers become more aware of dreaming, they are generally more able to direct or "consciously" shape the dream. By "characterological," I mean that some dreamers demonstrate a greater facility for the cultivation of lucid dreaming attention than others, perhaps due to unique, intrinsic capacities or traits that support greater self-awareness in the dreaming context.[4]

The quality of lucidity is not unique to the dream, but much more a feature of consciousness, particularly in the everyday sense. If I am thinking, do I know that I am thinking? If I am feeling, am I aware of feeling what I feel? If I imagine, am I aware that I am imagining? When reading a book, the story takes over and I "lose myself" in the narrative and, therefore, reflexivity recedes into the background; if interrupted, however, I suddenly recover my self-awareness. Psychically, there is a gestalt shift from absorption in the story (or movie or other medium) to a reclaiming of the more reflective gestalt, my "normative" state of self-aware being. The quality or intensity of lucidity as an index of self-awareness might be a key to identify those persons who bring greater lucidity to dreaming. In my own case, I tend to be highly reflexive—that is, keenly aware of what is happening around me and within me and aware of how inner and outer mingle and merge.[5] The gestalt pattern—the contextual moment indicating the focus of attention—seems to sustain itself within a boundary condition. The story becomes "absorbing" in the sense that there is a psychic state, an imaginative envisioning that is participatory and emotionally engaging (just like a dream) that tends to suppress normative reflexivity. But if another stimulus acts to shift attention, then the spell is broken, and one falls out of the induced gestalt state and back into more normative self-awareness. The capacity for lucidity may reflect a willingness to sustain a quality of awareness (being lucid) that challenges the absorbing, transic gestalt of the dream. Like reading a novel, the dream is an alternative reality experience whose content and functions may best be actualized through a kind of "ego absorption" into the story or dream scenario. If the dream serves an integrative function, then heightened reflexivity or lucidity might interfere with the natural constructive and

deconstructive processes or psychic consequences of the dreaming event.

Lucidity Is Subversive

It is interesting to consider the subversive character of lucidity. In which ways might lucid dreaming subvert dreaming content from its more normative function of expressing "unconscious" (non-reflexive) psychic processes? From my own perspective, there is a delicate balance between *allowing* whatever occurs and *guiding* what occurs, even in an indirect sense.[6] In many ways, this brings us back to the question of lucidity more generally: to what degree might reflexive awareness impair or impact normative cognitive and emotional functions? There is, however, a profound difference between reflexive awareness and reflexive control. The question is, to what degree do we control our thoughts or emotions as compared to the degree to which we "allow" thought and emotion to follow a more spontaneous and perhaps unpredictable but revelatory course? The psychological consensus seems to fall more on the side of allowing than controlling, although no doubt some degree of control is necessary and desirable.[7]

Here I would like to make a distinction between attention and will. To bring attention to the dream is a necessary aspect of understanding and engaging the dream; will is required to direct attention toward the nebulous, fascinating, and provocative aspects of dreaming and, even more so, toward its more mundane and conventional expressions. Lucid dreaming could be characterized as a type of "willful intent" in the sense that the dreamer seeks not only to be aware of dreaming (in the moment), but also to shape an outcome or consequence. Conversely, there is another kind of lucidity, one that I find more expressive of my own dreaming experience, which brings awareness or attention to the dream as a lucid "participant observer." The goal is to sustain awareness or heightened lucidity of what occurs in the dream rather than to direct the dream to a preconceived or rationalized outcome.

In some ways, the harnessing of attention to what arises in an unpredictable, subjective, or intersubjective sense is an enactive, participatory form of knowing. By "enactive," I mean "a bringing forth" of that which

arises through embodied, inspirational living, through authentic commitment and practice, and not simply through abstract thinking or externally learned behaviors.[8] By attending to what arises, in and through lucid consciousness, in waking and dreaming, and allowing that awareness to inform my interactions, perceptions, and decisions, I actualize my latent potential. However, this knowing is not simply an accommodation to my rational, everyday self as much as it is often a challenge and contestation with deeper unrealized, at times resisted, possibilities. In this sense, my conscious intent is one of self-surpassing—to overcome self-limitation, to break free of social and collective conditioning, to discover and embody a more expansive consciousness with ever-deepening lucidity. And not just in my dreams! Lucidity then becomes an index of reflexive awareness that I bring to my interactions within the world-system. By "world-system," I mean all those elements of consciousness, however subtle or esoteric, that define a dynamic, interactive sense of a "living cosmos" in which we as co-participants and co-creators seek to sustain complex physical, subtle, and energetic relations.[9] This task is both communal and individual. The goal of lucidity in the broader ontological context is to bring awareness and attention to what becomes manifest even in the most subtle and refined sense. For me, this is not a matter of "controlling" what appears or predetermining an outcome of lucid attention as much as it is a matter of soliciting through embodiment those qualities of awareness I most value (for example, a calm mind) so as to learn what appears when I embody these values. The embodiment of these values is itself a focusing lens for such lucidity; our habits, actions, mental attitudes, and interpersonal relations all set the stage for the degree and quality of lucidity we bring to the dream (and to waking life).

However, the nature of consciousness is so fluid, adaptive, and responsive to latent intentions that the utmost attention is required. The challenge is to be truly conscious and clear—that is, free of underlying determinisms that might manifest spontaneously but only as images of unresolved and unintegrated psychic tensions. The belief that lucidity can simply be called up as a distinct quality of consciousness is highly misleading. The intimate connections among lucidity, attention, and receptivity suggest that there is a complex of influences that can shape our perceptions and predetermine even our most sincere intentions. The subversive quality of lucidity might then be a good thing; that is, the very intention for lucidity challenges the normative psychic response, seeks greater awareness, and, in a self-surpassing sense,

accommodates new unpredicted insights that arise in the gap between the known and the unknown. Of course, this also means accepting the negative, the shadow side, and the unfinished, unrefined psychic elements that surge forth seeking accommodation.[10] The grounding context for that material is a stable consciousness that is fluid enough to accept the unexpected and yet expansive enough to find an embodied way to integrate and thereby transform that dark material. The problem with control is that it does not allow for a necessary surging forth of the unaccommodated aspects of psychic life. We cannot always live in the "eye of the hurricane," but on occasion we must for the sake of our development enter the storms and turbulence—how else will they ever be calmed and brought back into balance with the whole? This is particularly true in bringing lucidity to the collective.

Dreaming is not simply about our limited personal concerns, as I see it, but much more about our interpersonal relations and our submersion in a variety of collective and subcollective mentalities. I define dreaming as an *intersubjective* phenomenon, not as a strictly "subjective" activity. The belief (and I see it as no more than a belief) that dreaming expresses exclusively and redundantly the "inner life" of only the dreamer is what I call the "subjective bias"—a belief that is posited without reference to the actual nature of consciousness as a primal, *shared* phenomena. The nature of consciousness, as the unity of sensation, perception, and lucidity, arises fundamentally through our relationship to the world, to others, and to the living milieu (world-system) in which we develop. Dreams, as a primal phenomenon, profoundly reflect this shared context and are by their very nature reflexive of our relatedness to the world and to a multitude of other entities.[11] Thus that which arises in dreams, spontaneously or through provocation, reflects far more than the personal psyche of the dreamer; dreams reflect all the turbulence of our shared, collective, interactive lives and often what we bring to dreaming are the many unresolved tensions, conflicts, and injustices (and joys and discoveries) within the multifaceted collective. The tendency to think of lucidity as the action or intentions of the "dream ego" serving its own needs or interest overlooks a vast territory of collective need and the pressing contingencies of our often socially conflictive ways of life. Further, the transpersonal domain of consciousness —an even vaster territory that remains largely unexplored—can also impinge upon the dreamer such that lucidity faces the challenge of aligning self-awareness with self-transcending potential beyond known forms or collective

archetypes. A dream might then be characterized metaphorically as a Matriyoshka, a set of nesting dolls, each within the other, such that the dream contains the individual subject within the local collective, within larger collectives, within the transpersonal, with any number of substrates and subtle domains.

Mediation, Memory, and Meaning

I would argue that lucidity is a form of *mediation*—not simply a quality of consciousness, but more a quality whose function is to seek a meaningful relationship between the known and our latent potential as possibly more aware beings. Lucidity is a handmaiden to self-surpassing development; that is, it can act as a medium for the cultivation of a more complex awareness. Such a capacity, which exists as a heightened sense of participatory engagement with profound possibilities, as manifested in dreams is a genuine indication that dreams serve as a testing ground for psychic development. Whether a lucid dreamer pursues a strategy of strict dream control, with distinct formative intentions, or a strategy of dream allowing, the dream state is a perfect condition for experimentation and discovery.

It seems to me, based on my own lucid dreaming, that memory plays a crucial role in this process of lucid discovery. Many lucid dreamers report that something in the dream is not normative, often in part because they "remember" that something is different, changed, or abnormal. In one of my own recorded lucid dreams:

> *I am asked to dance by a male partner, but I remember that this is not normal and suddenly I become lucid. The male partner then turns into strange mythic creature that further accelerates lucidity into an even more expansive state.*

The key here is that I remember and reference through self-awareness dream contents to a normative condition and then see the contrast or difference between the norm and the current dream situation. Thus memory, as it reflects normative continuity, provides the grounding reference for the anomaly that appears in the dream. An anomaly can be apprehended only if there is some psychic context against which the anomaly stands out as non-normative. This context is formed through continuities in consciousness

(memories) that reflect normative waking perceptions and awareness. Even if the memory is linked to an unusual or unique event, the event remains embedded in the larger continuity of waking life, which operates as a containing field holding the gestalt of the normative context.

The lived process of day-to-day life is retained in consciousness to form "memory" and our capacity to "remember" reflects an ability to virtually recreate the past in the present.[12] By "virtual," I mean we often remember only selectively, through a partial, emphatic recreation of an incident as seen from a particular point of view, not always accurately "objective" in details or meaning. Memory continuity provides the measurable ground against which the anomaly or difference can be recognized in the dream and catalyze lucid awareness. Further, memory plays a crucial, absolutely critical role in the virtual recreation of the post-dream recollection, lucid or not. If we do not remember being lucid, then we lose the entire meaning and potential of the dream. Further, memory of other dreams may shape present or future dreams. Thus an excellent memory is a functional requirement for the recognition of the dreaming state, for the shaping of future dreams, and for recall of dreams as virtual experience.

Nevertheless, there is much more to memory than its simple grounding or recreative functions. I suggest that memory expresses two very distinctive capacities within consciousness: (1) the capacity to sustain coherent impressions of our states (by which I mean the dynamic conditions of our psychophysical life) and (2) the capacity to provide access to imprinting from specific psychic experiences. In dreaming, we can distinguish between the *state* of dreaming (i.e., the body may sleep and have certain brain wave patterns, observable eye motions, trance-like conditions, and so on) and the *content* of the dream (i.e., the story or scenario). Memory applies to both the state and the content, and the relationship between the two is interactive and reciprocal. I would put it this way: the body (and brain) is conditioned through the sleep state to sustain dreaming activity, while the mind (or psyche) is able to enact creatively explicit dream scenarios because of a learned bodily condition. The two aspects depend upon each other as evidenced by our abilities to daydream and to experience transic states as in reading a novel or watching a movie or through ritual activities. The relationship with sleep is relative and habitual, not mandatory or necessary; dreaming cannot be reduced to sleep states and is quite capable of manifesting in waking states.[13]

The significance of this dual relationship is that memory plays a crucial role in our capacity to sustain or develop lucidity. Put simply, I theorize that those persons with developed self-conscious memory skills will most likely have greater success in cultivating lucidity than those individuals whose memory skills are pragmatic, not related to self-awareness, or rather low or dysfunctional. The activity of "self-conscious" memory within consciousness in a waking sense can be indexed by a capacity to sustain awareness of what arises, reflexively, and to remember what arises, virtually, for the purpose of self-reflection and development. Imagine that everything you experience is like a dream and that your capacity to integrate experience depends on your capacity to remember (as "food for thought") so as to shape future actions and beliefs. In some ways, everything we experience is like a dream insofar as we need to recall experience and recreate it in a virtual memory sense to draw guidance from what we already know.

What we retain in memory is the very stuff of foundational identity. Our memory, however accurate or inaccurate, is a primal source for both identity formation and identity development. This includes our memories of dreams, altered states, visions, psychic perceptions, reasoned thought, and a large variety of psi phenomena whose virtual impressions or imprints shape our shared perceptions of the world. Lucidity in this context can be described as a mediating awareness that links states and contents—not only sleeping states, but also waking states that sustain dreaming activity. The trigger for lucidity is a spontaneous function of memory, the sudden recall of normative ground (remembered) contrasted with the anomalous aspect that results in an "Aha!" experience that wakes the dreamer into a lucid state. The capacity to suddenly remember the normative condition in the dreaming state suggests that memory is a "live connection" within a consciousness that can be stimulated by dreaming contents that challenge normative remembered life. Lucidity is like a spark that crosses a gap between the conditional state and the anomalous content; it arises as a result of the discontinuity in memory recall: "I must be dreaming because this (anomaly) does not happen in everyday life; therefore I wake up within the dream."

Of course, memory is just one aspect of lucidity within a much more complex field of lucid possibilities, and memory is much more complex than what I describe here. However, by reflecting on memory, we come to another aspect of lucid dreaming—namely, the discovery of meaning. Basically, this is a problem of interpretation in terms of the *significance* of lucid dreaming

broadly conceived and the question of the *goals* established for engaging in lucid dreaming practices. The discovery of meaning is a vast territory, so I will simply address the potential meaningful relationship between memory and lucidity.

In many ways, memory holds the "worldview" or beliefs of the individual as normatively constructed in the waking state. If I bring wakefulness to my dreaming, and if I am in a relatively normative state of self-awareness, then my worldview/beliefs as held in memory will certainly provide a context for my lucid interactions/behaviors or goals in my dream. But memory is fluid and can be reshaped as we change our values and beliefs; lucid dreaming as noted is a perfect context for experimentation and exploration of alternative states of awareness beyond normative attitudes. To accomplish this exploration, however, requires a certain courage and inner determination that are not strictly bound by memory or beliefs. While there are many goals for lucid dreaming, one worthy goal is to engage in a search for transpersonal encounter. Discontinuity in memory may trigger the lucid state, but once activated the dreamer faces the question of direction and action in the dream. Here I would suggest the *quest* motif or the search for higher states of consciousness is a substantive goal; whatever the content may be, the many paths of the quest can lead to a participatory, transformative encounter with deeper being. Entering the lucid condition then becomes an invitation to the search for altered states, new perceptions, and ontological discovery, all leading to new insights, knowledge, wisdom, and the possibility of mystical encounters.

The capacity to solicit such altered states, without predetermining the content, can best be accomplished by embodying the search for wisdom (as a core value) in the waking state to such a degree that it becomes an intrinsic feature impressed into memory. The desire for knowledge, or wisdom, is not simply a dream project; it is a waking life commitment that requires a dedication of time, energy, and self to a difficult and demanding task. The cultivation of higher values that are embodied in a way of life becomes existential content that can have powerful, formative influences on dreaming.[14] Meaning in this sense is found in the embodied memory of integrated values that form a real way of life lived and actualized by the dreamer in the waking state. If I live according to my highest values, those I hold as most valid and real, then the beliefs, ideas, and actions that support those values sink into memory, become part of me, and thus form a context

for the arising of dreams that reflect, challenge, and possibly subvert those values. Nevertheless, the motivational power of those values becomes a touchstone for the further development of self, however challenged in dreaming, through a process of reflection, dream recall, and modification of beliefs and actions in accord with even more healthy and integrated patterns of development. Lucidity in this process, as triggered by memory, is a condition that can motivate an exploration of states through a process of allowing and yet being as fully conscious as possible. The intent is to focus awareness in accord with embodied values in the dream context and to solicit direction, guidance, and meaning from the dream as a basis for discovery, insight, self-surpassing realizations, and, where necessary, shadow-work.

Imagination and Dream Logic

My first real written record of lucid dreaming starts with a past-life dream, recorded in the late 1970s primarily because of my interest in postmortem reincarnation theory. The quality of lucidity in this dream was simultaneously threefold: my awareness of dreaming, my awareness of lying in bed in a transic sleep state, and my awareness of a past-life scenario framed as a recovered "memory." This is a typical dream phenomenon for me of multiperspective dreaming—the context is not simply of being reflexively aware in the dream, but often of vividly experiencing other related states (bodily, emotional, sometimes cognitive activity that is ancillary to the dream and distinct from the scenario, my sleep state, identity disassociations, and so on). Throughout the entire dream I retained this threefold awareness, not as distinctly separate conditions, but as a unified flow of psychoperceptual activity, like temperature zones in water that retain their distinctive currents yet remain inseparable from the whole. The focal awareness was the dream scenario, but the ambient field included my bodily state (asleep in bed in a trance-like state) and the related awareness of being "lucid" (reflexively aware), triggered by the anomaly of the dream as a memory (I remember that my current life is other than the dream life). Further, there was a distinct sense of identity dissociation between my supposedly earlier (past-life) self and my current dreaming self. The dream logic embedded my current identity consciousness and memory as distinct from the "me" in the past-life dream

scenario, as though I was watching myself in a former age while my past-life self seemed to have some degree of awareness of a present-day dreamer "from the future." Further, part of the dream scenario comprised a trance-like state induced through musical activity (playing an instrument), which induced in my past self a vision of my "future" life (now).[15]

The value of the dream, for this discussion, is not the issue of past lives but rather the multiperspective problem in lucid dreaming. In a phenomenological sense, I would say that awakening to the dream through the arising of lucidity is only one step into the more complex multilayered capacities that consciousness can sustain (or develop) as it expands into higher spectrum domains of awareness.[16] What defines these domains is the conditional state of the dreamer's consciousness and the degree to which the dreamer is able to distinguish between a wide range of subtle *states* (regardless of the content of the dream). This applies to waking consciousness as well, not simply to dreaming. The issue of perception is relative in the sense that the observer is conditioned to perceive within a certain range. For example, when listening to music, some listeners can hear the different instruments and the individual vibrations (quality, performative excellence, tone, pitch, and so on) that make up the total sound environment, whereas others hear a much less differentiated "melodic" soundscape. In dreaming, we can apply this metaphor to the state of lucidity to suggest that lucidity also has its degrees and variations. For some dreamers, the range and complexity of what is perceived while lucid include much more than the unfolding of the dream scenario or story. I believe that there is a degree of selectivity involved in this process; that is, some dreamers have a wider range and capacity for attending to multiple lucid stimuli in the dreaming condition. If the attention is trained or sensitive to a high degree, it is possible to attend to multiple sources of information in the dreaming state—be it past life or present, mythic or surreal, conventional or idiosyncratic.

This sensitivity for multiperspective awareness must also depend on memory because like any learned ability, we carry that past learning into the present moment. Overall, my dreams have become increasingly more complex since the time of the previously mentioned dream. A large part of that increasing complexity is based on my lifelong study, careful analysis, and constant meditation on my dreams. In other words, the dedicated study of dreaming is itself a conditioning factor; through it, we become more sensitized to dreaming content, symbolization, and complex meanings

because we engage that material with serious intent for the purpose of development and discovery. A "living memory" develops through the embodiment of reflexive cognitive-emotive processes dedicated to dreamwork, journal records, discussion, group interaction, and general therapeutic practices. The memory of past dreams is heightened by reflecting on those dreams, a course that often leads to formative expression in current or future dreams. Thus the more one studies the dream and engages it authentically, the more strongly one becomes sensitized to the diverse multiperspective qualities of lucid awareness.[17] Inseparable from waking consciousness, lucid sensitivity pervades consciousness with great subtlety and enables the perceiver to be open to domains of subtle activity that would normally remain unseen by those whose attention is dedicated to a more material and sensory worldview.

Another issue of concern is the role and relationship of *imagination* within the dreaming process and the underlying "logic" that pervades the dream scenario. Stereotypically, dreams have been described as "irrational" or "nonsensical," "bizarre" or "meaningless"—all judgments made from a supposedly empirical point of view that prides itself on rationality and severely redundant thinking. However true these observations may be for some segment of the dreaming population, there is nevertheless another way to characterize the meaningfulness of dreams without a necessary reversion to purely "symbolic" analogy or metaphorical reductionism. The dream always has its own logic; however strange, unexpected, or challenging, and however threatening or anxiety producing, this logic is itself an expression of genuine psychic meaning. Even so, dream "logic" is not Socratic or a form of didactic rationalism. Dream logic is highly imaginative, creative, mythic, often surreal and provocative, and meant to shock or challenge as much as to confront and inspire. The difference between waking logic and dream logic is perhaps similar to the difference between a descriptive narrative and a poem, between realistic and surrealistic art, between classical music and trance dance, or between modern constructivism and deconstructive post-structural analysis. Thus being lucid also means being subject to the illusive and surreal character of the dream logic, to the unexpected concurrence of multiple psychic influences forming a unique and often enigmatic, dynamic expression. This is one of the primary reasons why "rational control" in the lucid dreaming context can be subversive—it can impose a more rational waking-consciousness agenda on the spontaneity of psychic undercurrents

attempting to articulate themes and concerns missed and not addressed by the rational everyday mind.

In the early 1980s, I recorded what I termed a "hyper-lucid" dream, meaning a dream-related state of perception that was something more than simply being aware of dreaming.

> *In a dream-like state, I am moving beyond "dreaming" into complex altered states whose contents seemed to reveal something of the origins of consciousness, a domain of supraconscious, cosmic awareness in which there is no scenario or dream scene, even though I am traversing states that I attained through dreaming.*

Here dreaming became a medium of consciousness transformation, a means to attain altered perceptions that require a very high degree of lucidity not to "lose the state," as it tended to be at times profoundly overwhelming. Also in this type of dreaming I note that symbols took on a new potential as vehicles for the transitional phases between normative consciousness, dreaming states, expansive transic states, and participatory mystical encounters. In such a process, the symbol is not charged with local meaning or a specific cultural or cross-cultural expression per se, but rather imbued with a charged field of psychic potential creating a *fascinans*, a strategic attraction whose fascination draws the dreamer from the dream into higher domain perception, like a symbolic key to a variety of altered states. The psyche of the individual in these transitional phases tends toward dispersion and loss of consciousness by being overwhelmed and inundated with a surplus of heightened awareness—the symbol becomes then a psychic center, a *gravitas* that holds the attention and allows for the shift, even though the symbol may finally fall away as the deep context of the total field opens. In this particular dream, the scenario falls away and what remains is a vast field of consciousness, energy, and ontological sentience of a profound transpersonal nature, albeit also enigmatic and somewhat ineffable.

What is the role of the imagination in the process of lucid dreaming? I would suggest that the imaginative function, meaning the capacity to creatively express new forms, ideas, images, and so on, is linked to memory from other dreams and waking life—not simply as a product of memory, but rather as an expression of our human potential for growth, change, and development. I see the life force, the *élan vital*, the inherent dynamic vitality of each living being, as constantly seeking to embody this living potential in actual expressive forms and actions, rather than simply as abstractions or

ideals. The real capacity for dreaming is an expression of that deep potential within us that swells up and seeks manifestation, impressed in memory as a resource of future discovery.[18] Unfortunately, without conscious intent, without application and dedicated existential commitment, the suggested dream content (and underlying memory potential) all too often simply subsides and disappears into the inner façade of daily life. Imagination, as a verb and not a noun, is the expressive formulation of possibilities into forms of virtual experience.

> *In a dream, my dream body transforms into a very aware hawk; I am flying high above the ground, observing everything with a keen, lucid awareness, which in waking life I cannot do. The dream induces a hawk-state that translates to my waking awareness and creates a heightened mode of (hawk-like) lucid attention.*

This dream reflects a kind of sharing through the imagination of other types of perception and a logic that can foster perceptual development; this is not a logic built on the rational conventions of a nondreaming culture. The source of the imaginative expression comes out of the whole psyche—not just from a rationalizing or conventional aspect, but out of the depth of the potential that all individuals embody if they access the dream as a medium for enhanced human perception. The role of imagination in this process is to provide often startling, strange, ambiguous imagery and stories that seek to draw the conventional mind toward new insights by directly challenging normative rational preconceptions.

As someone who has had many flying dreams over the years, I experience most of them as transitional in the sense of creating a state of lucidity that also leads to other altered states. The medium of flying becomes an indicative sign that I am deepening into a more conscious awareness of potential. In a lucid dream in the late 1980s:

> *I become lucid by flying, an event that induces lucid awareness. In the dream, I am in a very transparent state of almost egoless consciousness; I fly to the apartment of two unrecognized women and I pick up a book lying on a table, open it, and see that the pages are shining with light while sparks shoot out from the book, altering my consciousness into a very profound state —and yet, at the same time, I sense that I am seeing something of my own writing produced in the future and not yet written, a kind of clairvoyant affirmation.*[19]

This is a multiperspective dream because I know I am lucid but also sleeping, and I am also aware of reflexive cognitive processes that result in a

decision not to direct my flight but to see where the flying will take me. The state of lucidity here is a forestage or transitional prelude to an even more altered state whose content requires that I maintain lucidity but allows that lucidity to guide me toward a transpersonal outcome that I do not imagine rationally. At the time of this dream, I had never published anything, although I had done some writing; thus while I was questioning the possibility of success rationally, the dream was offering encouragement and support for that success. At the same time, it was also indicating something more—that the nature of the success would be somewhat contingent upon the content of my writing, a content that should reflect a certain degree of "light" in the context of feminized influences.

In another lucid dream from this same period:

> *I am lucid and flying through the sky (going wherever the flying leads me) and as I fly through various "levels" (or domains) the quality of my consciousness shifts according to the domain of flight to reveal some facets of the dream unseen until the shift. In one shift, I see into the future; in another shift, I see into the far past; in another shift, I see into a subtle domain where spirit beings exist; then I meet a spiritual teacher who explains how, in a ritual fashion, to "open the third eye," which results in a tremendous shift in which a vast multitude of atemporal subtle realms become apparent to me.*

Here, lucidity is again a transitional state leading to even more vividly altered awareness in which the *Imaginal Realm* opens with great clarity and highly complex content.[20] Rather than think of the imagination as simply a creative mental faculty, I suggest that it is a psychic function whose capacity allows us to access realms of perception that are transpersonal, mythic, and alive with forces, powers, beings, and a panoply of manifestations separate and distinct from our normal individualized and usually "demythologized" consciousness. Further, this understanding implies something other than a reference to the collective nature of the psyche, if by "collective" we simply mean our current collective diversity. The Imaginal Realm, as I understand it, is also an emergent, co-creative realm of discovery; as an expression of active imagination, it sustains a vast potential and resource for genuinely transformative human development.

In all of these examples, it is clear that the "dream logic" is linked to the imaginative capacity and functions in at least a semi-autonomous fashion that results in something more than an unusual or unpredictable story. The underlying current in these examples reveals a transpersonal element in the general unfolding of the dream scenario. In this sense, lucid dreaming can be

conceptualized as a transitional state, an intensification of consciousness as preparatory for even more "lucid" awareness manifesting in a variety of altered states. When an attitude of "allowing" is conjoined with a high degree of attentiveness to the *state* induced by the dream (and less to the content of the dream), it seems to promote a condition in which the dream acts as a stimulus for a series of shifts in state. The degree to which the individual dreamer can maintain lucidity and awareness during these shifts reflects a developing capacity for even further shifts. The ability to make such a shift may depend on the degree of resistance or acceptance of boundary conditions that must be crossed to access the new state.[21] Moreover, the imprint of these shifts on the consciousness of the dreaming individual, held in memory, creates an embodied context for further lucid dreams and altered states. Waking reflections on lucid dreams and accompanying states also reinforce the capacity for entering into a variety of such states not only in sleep but also while waking—a fact well illustrated by the multitude of ritual practices whose express purpose is to alter awareness and to provoke a manifestation of altered states (such as trance, spirit communication, shamanic journeys, and so on). When the ability to shift has been "kindled" (i.e., when a threshold is crossed, allowing the state to become manifest), then it may be easier for further shifts to occur—a development called "tuning" by some brain researchers (i.e., using a variety of techniques to induce the state).[22] To experience a lucid dream with great clarity tunes the psyche in such a way as to make it easier for the individual to have more lucid dreams.

In the late 1990s, I had a lucid dream in which, again through flying, I became fully lucid in the dream state:

> *I am flying downward, into the lower chambers of the earth, where I encounter a large underworld domain. In this chamber I see many human beings who are dreaming, in sleep-trance states, but who are not lucid. It is like a realm of the "dead" in the sense that they lie entranced by dreaming, but are not aware of the greater spectrum of perceptions they might access in a more lucid dream state. Then I fly into a second, deeper chamber where I meet Egyptian-like masters of the underworld, tall, ancient archetypal beings wearing robes and with golden metallic headgear. They tell me that I am not supposed to be "lucid" in this chamber; it is only for the contemplation of the cosmos (the ceiling is domed and the stars are visible in the night sky, such that what is above is also below). I return to the first chamber but my lucid state is creating an "aura" around my dream body that is impacting other dreamers and "waking" them into lucid states. A female guardian figure appears and tells me I must stop and leave the lucid state because it is creating disturbance among the other dreamers. However, I realize that I do not know how to stop being lucid! Further, as I interact with the guardian, other are attracted to our interactions and also start to interact with us. Then a new possibility opens and a healing energy (a golden orange sphere of light) appears over me, flows into my head, and*

then out through my arms and hands, healing one of the persons interacting with us. When I wake up, I perceive there is a psychic imprint of sphere of light over my head, which contains healing energy that I could tap in a waking state by visualizing the dream healing.

In this dream, the imaginal world has taken on archetypal structure and content that suggest the interactive effects of lucid dreaming on others. If dreaming has psychic content that energizes psi phenomena, it is possible that a state of lucidity might stimulate lucidity in others if we conceive of dreaming as a subtle *intersubjective* field. Rather than thinking of dreams as isolated to an individual dreamer, perhaps the field of the dream can transmit subtle influences that could impact other receptive dreamers (as field-to-field influences). Such a lucid influence might require a transmissive state that is "deeper" than usual or more closely linked to a subcollective domain (symbolized as "underworld") whose archetypal content is thus more "cosmic"—that is, more fully congruent with a widely shared field of other participant dreamers. Perhaps in our normative dreaming we are really very much "on the surface" of possible psychic connections with others, but in certain states we can more easily participate in a shared field where the psychic condition of the individual dreamer may subtly interact with other dreamers and influence shared dream contents.

My dream also reveals another significant aspect of dream development—namely, the formation of a psychic structure, a sphere of light, hovering over the head in waking consciousness in a "dreamlike way." A dream symbol can function as an attractor for the awakening of consciousness potential, not simply through associations to ideas or verbal meanings, but also as a more esoteric virtual symbol whose contemplation can act to catalyze an altered state that gives access to particular psychic capacities in a transformative sense.

In 2006, I had a very intense lucid dream in which a certain altered state, facilitated by lucid dreaming, created a perception of what I call the dreaming holosphere, or a global field of shared, interactive dreaming.

In this dream, I am lucidly interactive with what appear to be other lucid dreamers. We discuss the fact that we are immersed in interactive dreaming (whereas in other dreams when I try to discuss being in a lucid state, dreamers usually do not respond or they shrink away, blocking awareness).[23] *The term "holosphere" comes to mind, referring to the nature of my experience within this dreaming domain as a very interactive, almost instantaneous global domain of immediate connection and communication among a vast network of lucid dreamers. Symbolically, I would describe it as a kind of "Gaia-field"—a world-spanning psychic domain*

that seems very alive, active with tens of thousands of dreamers at all times active and interactive.[24]

If at any given moment large portions of the human race are in sleep-dream states, then as the world turns, those waking are balanced by those sleeping, such that at all times dreaming and waking state of consciousness are an inseparable dynamic within a single global continuum, a collective field that sustains both waking and dreaming activities. Is it possible to access this shared field of dreaming through state-specific dreams—specifically, through the catalyst of lucidity, or heightened reflexivity, while in the dream state? Further, and if this possibility is suggested by the dream, is it possible that conscious lucid dreamers, interacting through the holosphere, might mutually combine intelligence and will to motivate change in the waking world? If dreaming is intersubjective, and if psychic influences flow through the collective mentality, then conscious interactions in mutual dreaming may have a subtle impact on receptive others in a waking state. Why would we imagine that only conscious decisions and actions are likely to have subconscious influence on others? Dream intentions among lucid dreamers may also have subconscious influences in and through a variety of states on awake individuals, some of which may have a significant, albeit subtle, impact on the collective intensity of a given state. While the holosphere may be a symbolic representation of the Imaginal Realm, the implication is that lucid dreaming might create subconscious influences that could motivate mutually formed, collective intentions in the waking world.

The Awakened Dreamer

What I have discussed about lucid dreaming here also applies to the waking state—that is, an ability to bring greater lucidity into waking consciousness to access altered states of perception. These altered states are often quite subtle, consisting of a mild shift or intensification that results in greater clarity of mind or new insights or simply vivid perceptions in the field of focus. An intermediary condition between waking awareness and dreaming is the *daydream*, an intense fantasy of a possible action or interaction, which is experienced in a very vivid dream-like state. Again, the issue is the state, not the content of the dreaming. The capacity to move fluidly into altered states

(such as a vivid daydream) is a means for shifting perception and engaging a possibly more holistic field of awareness. These altered states may include stages of awareness that reveal the formative processes in dreaming. Recently, I had an experience of "prelucid" awareness is which I am not sleeping, not in a hypnogogic state, but resting, relaxed, lying down in a mild altered state, aware of my surroundings but also intensely aware of spontaneously arising psychic contents.[25] These contents are more like "dream seeds" or highly condensed psychic content that might flower into a dream but which in the prelucid state is really only potential, unexpressed content for a dream. In this prelucid state, what I experience is an inchoate turbulence that I identify as an experience of "foundational consciousness" that is not my normative individual consciousness, not my self-conscious reflexivity, but a more primal subconsciousness from which arises an entire spectrum of possible states that are given form and structure by the intention, capacities, and dreaming development of the individual.

The state is a prelucid, threshold awareness aligned with an emergent lucidity not yet submerged in dreaming. In that pre-state, the bubbling sea of subconscious ideas and images appears very active, not at all passive. I would describe the condition as a constant collision of atomistic dream quanta, with each particle holding a certain transient spark of explicit, qualitative awareness and potential meaning—an image, a feeling, a very simple idea or ideation, a virtual momentary flash of diverse bubbles of "possible consciousness" holding specific nuance or signification. This state would be almost entirely "unconscious" to most dreamers, because consciousness has not yet synthesized the diverse elements necessary for actualizing an integrated dream scenario through a process gestalt that arises spontaneously (but is directed by latent intentions and memory) out of formative dream contents.[26] However, if the individual is able to bring nascent lucidity to these emergent dream contents, to the formative process, then he or she can influence the formative structure of the dream consciously, even in its entirety, before the dream actually unfolds as a dramatic scenario. I say this because I have done it, not once but numerous times, and there is nothing exceptional about doing so. Indeed, at a subconscious level, this is how dreams are normally created—we subconsciously select the various elements that act to construct the dream. The only difference is an ability to achieve this feat consciously in a prelucid state, selecting dream elements without actually determining how those elements will combine spontaneously into a

dream. This is analogous to an oracular practice of choosing an explicit handful of colored stones and throwing them onto a cloth to see which pattern they will form.

But if this ability is possible in a conscious sense, in a prelucid state, then it is also possible in the waking world. The conscious ability to choose those elements of awareness that form a gestalt based on our attention is the primary example. This is no different than "selective attention"—we choose the focus (the state) and the significant elements (of the state) either from inner motivations or because the environment calls us to shift attention. For example, when we hear a siren, we listen to see what the sound indicates for us or our situation. In terms of describing the awakened dreamer state, I would suggest that a heightened lucidity results from a greater attention to what arises inwardly in response to what occurs outwardly.[27] This means overcoming habituated responses, fostering creative awareness in all circumstances, and being open to the emergence of inner subtle imagery, to associations and dreamlike stimuli that may connect to outer influences, possibly shaped by a collective context. The maze of inner psychic possibilities is mapped to the maze of outward influences, but to what degree does lucidity play a role in this process? Just as in lucid dreaming, the issue of "control" may require conscious decision making and choices for action. A heightened lucidity may also result from an "allowing" that stays highly conscious of the dynamic field interactions, observes carefully what arises in the field, bases actions on those perceptions, and then retains a vivid memory of what arises. The momentary state (or mood) of the individual, or personal interactions that are highly distinctive in habit, may play a powerful role in determining what appears.[28]

Here value orientation is an indispensable feature of how psychic interactions are developed and negotiated. A person's state—frustrated, closed, negative, or open, cheerful, loving—cultivated through lucid dedication to certain beliefs or practice (or habits) is the conditional ground for what appears. We are not neutral participants in daily life, but rather are highly conditioned and dense with attitudes, ideas, beliefs, and habit energies that act as a filter for whatever we experience. Similarly, we are dense with dreaming, with memory patterns, with psychic influences that act to attract or repel certain experiences or encounters.

Specific context provides a collective matrix for the interactions that

occur in our waking and dreaming lives; mastering the psychic influences that bear down upon us requires the utmost degree of lucidity and consciousness. The reflexive capacity is not simply analytic; it is also very syncretic and integrative by acting as a stimulus for accessing latent potentials (often held in memory) for action that may easily appear in a dreamlike state, spontaneous daydreaming, or imaginative flight that accesses possibilities for behavior. The grounding principle in this process is found in our capacity to embody the possible into the actual—that is, to not simply dream, but to embody and put into practice the insights that arise in lucid moments of perception. In the same way that it is crucial to remember dreams and reflect upon them, it is also crucial to remember insights and intuitions that occur in the waking state, to reflect upon those insights, and to find ways to apply those insights to an improved way of life. Otherwise, as in dreaming, the insight becomes a passing illusion, an unrealized potential not actualized but left latent and submerged.

A primary means of recognizing the sudden emergence of a lucid insight is to identify in waking awareness, as in lucid dreaming, the anomaly or disjunctive element that stands in contrast to normative perceptual patterns. These often fleeting, "dreamlike" impressions or intuitions are frequently ignored because they seem anomalous to ordinary habituated perceptions. Psychic impressions, telepathic intuitions, and clairvoyant perceptions may appear as activities within the Imaginal Realm, not as hard facts or measurable data, but as subtle images, transient intuitions, or unexplainable feelings. The waking dream—that is, the lived world of multiple intersecting domains of information—cannot be reduced to simply the "senses" but encompasses all that is accessible to the dreaming mind.

The re-enchantment of waking perceptions does not require a reversion to magical or mythic theory. We can form more expansive horizons of human perception, new epistemological attitudes in which dreaming and waking share a single continuum that merges into more collective, hyperlucid, and transpersonal domains. Lucid dreaming in this context becomes a medium for exploration and discovery, for training the imagination and attention, and for cultivation of altered states leading to possible types of higher consciousness. The shaping of that consciousness depends on more than habitual perceptions; it requires the development of core values that shape intentions, which in turn sustain a quality of reflexive awareness. What we bring to the dream is a qualitative emphasis, shaped aspirations, habituated attitudes, and

embodied practices. There is nothing neutral about lucidity; it is rather a qualitative distillation of intersubjective life, an ontological perspective informed by self-reflections, conscious living, and collective and subconscious influences. The practice of cultivating lucidity in dreams requires an ability to sustain an *intermediary* condition between what is subconscious, conscious, and hyperconscious. As a practice, lucid dreaming not only depends upon the application of a conscious "I" to the (waking) dream content, but also requires an embodied reflexivity that seeks to participate in the exploration of higher states of consciousness. Transpersonal perception is one means by which lucidity develops as a qualitative condition for sustaining a diversity of consciousness states and for retaining memories of those states. This does not mean that lucidity necessarily leads to higher consciousness, as pathological conditions may influence and shape perceptions. Nevertheless, the healthy function of lucidity in a well-balanced, creative individual expresses a developmental reflexivity that significantly enhances the ability to access and retain impressions of a wide range of states.

In this process, the attention of the dreamer can be cultivated in the waking state as a prelude to perceptions that merge the waking-dreaming continuum into a broadband spectrum that allows access to human capacities not yet fully actualized. Just as dreams access unrealized potential, in light and shadow, so, too, our visionary capacities must seek to integrate both personal and collective tensions as unrealized psychic abilities latent within the dreaming populace. Awakening to the underlying psychic influences, to the collective dynamics of unresolved tension, can create a "lightning rod" effect in which the dreamer (awake or asleep) becomes a conduit for the manifestations of collective need. Sensitive individuals can be overwhelmed by psychic perceptions that reflect our intersubjective conditions, not simply an individuated need or desire. In that case, the individual must learn inner stability and compassionate detachment from the immediacy of what appears through collective tensions. The construction of any model of "higher consciousness" is not without its own shadows and imperfections, and dreamers who seek the embodiment of that consciousness must develop a very grounded and centered transparency that can see and recognize the tensions and imbalances, yet maintain a positive attitude toward healing those tensions.[29]

Only by being fully awake to the dreaming capacity, and its creative and

transformative effects, in everyday life can we hope to contribute to human development in a full-spectrum sense. Each of us has individual gifts or abilities, so how we contribute will differ, perhaps radically. Through the affirmation of dreaming we open the doors of perception, and through lucid dreaming we bring those gifts to greater development. This requires constant practice, dedication to the ongoing processes of reflexivity, and a willingness to work with what appears to become something more than what we are now.[30]

Notes

1. See the following of my works: Lee Irwin, *The Dream Seekers: Native American Visionary Traditions of the Great Plains* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma, 1994); *Visionary Worlds: The Making and Unmaking of Reality* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, Series on Western Esoteric Traditions, 1996); *Awakening to Spirit: On Life, Illumination, and Being* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1999); *Alchemy of Soul: On the Art of Inner Development* (Isaaquah, WA: Lorian Press, 2007); *Coming Down from Above: Prophecy, Renewal and Resistance in Native American Religions* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma, 2008).
2. The entire dream journal is over 500 single-spaced typed pages, of which about 10 percent is on lucid dreaming.
3. For a good review of lucid dream parameters based on age and gender, particularly as more common among women than men, see Elizabeth A. Boerger, "Associations among Boundary Structure, Gender, and Beliefs about Control of Dreams," *Dreaming* 19, no. 3 (2009): 172–186.
4. Excellent examples of this ability can be found Robert Waggoner, *Lucid Dreaming: Gateway to the Inner Self* (Needham, MA: Moment Point Press, 2009), passim. I strongly recommend this book to those interested in developing lucid dream abilities and a better understanding of related theories in such dreaming.
5. In the spectrum of consciousness, there seems to be little difference between "inner and outer," as these designations tend to be more conventionally designated domains that are not, in fact, distinct but rather part of, or integral to, larger, more complex fields of interactive influences that shape consciousness.
6. See Waggoner, *Lucid Dreaming*, 17, where lucid "control" is less like direct control and more like sailing within a sea of larger currents. Also see Robert Moss, *Conscious Dreaming* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1996) for an alternative where he repudiates control in lucid dreams but develops a model of "conscious dreaming" as an exploratory function of human development.
7. See Paul D. Tyson et al., "Lucid, Prelucid, and Nonlucid Dreams Related to the Amount of EEG Alpha Activity during REM Sleep," *Psychophysiology* 21, no. 4 (1984): 450, where they note the possibility that "control may constrain the potential information integration function of lucidity [in dreams]."
8. For more on enactive, participatory knowing, see Jorge Ferrer, *Revisioning Transpersonal Theory: A Participatory of Human Spirituality* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), 123, passim.
9. A world-system, as I envision it, contains multitude of worldviews, cultural forms, and historical

variations, such that there is no single "system" other than the intracultural, global dynamics of how and to which degree all those diverse views, forms, and variations interact. For more on this subject, see Irwin, *Visionary Worlds*.

10. For an interesting account of research on nightmares as related to lucid dreaming in an Asian context, see Tadao Hori, "Cultural Note on Dreaming and Dream Study in the Future: Release from Nightmare and Development of Dream Control Technique," *Sleep and Biological Rhythms* 3 (2005): 49–55.
11. For the import of "others" in relation to dreaming more generally, the importance of empathy, and significant references to additional research in the area, see David Kahn and Allan Hobson, "Theory of Mind in Dreaming: Awareness of Feelings and Thoughts of Others in Dreams," *Dreaming* 15, no. 1 (2005): 48–57.
12. For an introduction to the problem of modern cultural repression (and recovery) of dream memory, see Raymond L. M. Lee, "Forgotten Fantasies? Modernity, Reenchantment, and Dream Consciousness," *Dreaming* 20, no. 4, (2010): 288–304.
13. For a thorough account of waking visions, see Irwin, *Coming Down from Above*, in which I give many visionary dream accounts as facilitated through dancing and dream rituals, not through sleep.
14. For a review of the "existential" and "spiritual" aspects in lucid dreaming, as related to developmental functions, see Don Kuiken et al., "The Influence of Impactful Dreams on Self-Perceptual Depth and Spiritual Transformation," *Dreaming* 16, no. 4 (2006): 258–279.
15. Music in my current life often acts to induce deeply meditative states—minimally this reflects positive past memory experiences in this life and theoretically some form of past-life conditioning.
16. There really is no adequate language for what I am describing here. I use the term "higher spectrum" as a metaphor meant to suggest that like other energy states, there can be multiple dream frequencies, each of which requires some degree of receptivity and perceptual sensitivity to sustain, not simply one lucid condition.
17. For an overview on learned therapeutic aspects of lucid dreaming, see Brigitte Holzinger, "Lucid Dreaming: Dreams of Clarity," *Contemporary Hypnosis* 26, no. 4 (2009): 216–224.
18. See Lee, "Forgotten Fantasies?", 301, where he emphasizes the importance of previous dream memory for the construction of new and future dreams.
19. See Waggoner, *Lucid Dreaming*, 77–85, for more on the "light experience" in flying dreams; also Kuiken et al., "The Influence of Impactful Dreams," 267.
20. The term "Imaginal Realm" is borrowed with adaptation from Henri Corbin's theory of the *Mundus Imaginalis* though unlike Corbin, I see this realm as inherently emergent, not simply a field of preexistent archetypes. For more, see Henri Corbin, *The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism* (New Lebanon, NY: Omega Publications, 1994), 42–47. For a Sufi master, Da'ud Qaysari (c. 1350), writing on the *Mundus Imaginalis*, see Henri Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 144–147. For a contemporary use of the term "Imaginal" in dreamwork, see Louis Hagood, "Awakening to Dreams," *Journal of Religion and Health* 45, no. 2 (2006): 160–170.
21. See Boerger, "Associations among Boundary Structure," 184, where "thin boundaries" are considered an indication of those more likely to have lucid dreams.
22. See Thomas DuBois, *An Introduction to Shamanism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 109–132, where he gives an interesting review of altered states, ritual activity, and brain research.
23. See Waggoner, *Lucid Dreaming*, 207–226, for an excellent overview on mutual dreaming.
24. Robert D. Romanyshyn, "Eros, Angels, and the Colors of Nature," *Alexandria* 4 (1997): 163–180,

gives a striking account of how consciousness extends to other species and the vegetable, mineral, animal, and angelic worlds.

25. For an interesting analysis of the prelucid dream state and its association with lucid dreaming and high REM alpha brain waves, see Paul D. Tyson et al., "Lucid, Prelucid, and Nonlucid Dreams Related to the Amount of EEG Alpha Activity during REM Sleep," *Psychophysiology* 21, no. 4 (1984): 442–451.
26. An interesting corollary to dream control may be found in studies on the impact of video games and visual stimulation in which players must exert control similar to lucid dreams. See Jayne Gackenbach, "Electronic Media and Lucid-Control Dreams: Morning after Reports," *Dreaming* 19, no. 1 (2009): 1–6.
27. See Lee, "Forgotten Fantasies?", 288–304, who emphasizes the role of memory in the process of the re-enchantment of dreaming as part of the continuum of waking life in contrast to rationalized repression and segregation of dreams from waking life.
28. See David G. Mark, "Waking Dreams," *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 19 (2009): 405–414, where he discusses several interesting examples of spontaneous imagery as "waking lucid dreams" during psychoanalytic therapy.
29. For more on the shadow aspects related to higher states of consciousness, see Michael Daniels, *Shadow, Self, Spirit: Essays in Transpersonal Psychology* (Charlottesville, VA: Imprint Academic, 2005), 71–93.
30. For an interesting example of how lucidity and a variety of altered states may affect research in human potential, see William Braud, "The Farther Reaches of Psi Research: Future Choices and Possibilities," in *Parapsychology of the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Michael A. Thalbourne and Lance Storm (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2005), 38–62.

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7

Educational Frontiers of Training Lucid Dreamers

Tim Post

Introduction

Although we are mostly unaware of our nightly dreams when we dream, in a "lucid" dream one does attain awareness while dreaming.[1] In this seemingly paradoxical but fascinating dream state, lucidity can be conceptualized as a spectrum encompassing varying degrees of metacognitive processing similar to that occurring in waking consciousness. Potentially, lucid dreamers may attain full awareness of the dream context and while dreaming are able to reason accordingly, access waking-life memories, and volitionally act and reflect upon lucid dream intentions set prior to or during sleep.[2] Unrestricted by external physical laws and free of social consequence, experienced lucid dreamers can choose to deliberately influence dream content in pursuit of shaping any desirable dream experience that they are able to conceive while dreaming. Lucid dream intentions generally range from seeking exhilarating adventure (e.g., flying, dream sex, dream exploration) to enhancing psychological development (e.g., creative problem solving, rehearsal, overcoming fears) in preparation for everyday life challenges and goals.[3]

While lucid dreaming is not yet formally employed in current psychiatric practices, studies suggest the potential of using lucid dreams for improving psychological well-being. In light of neuroscientific endeavor, it is argued that lucid dreams can also be used to investigate the psychophysiological nature of reflective awareness in dreams.[4] However, a prerequisite for applying research findings and conducting additional studies is effective training that enables research subjects to more frequently and reliably have lucid dreams. *Lucid dreaming induction* can be considered effective only

when it allows research subjects, patients, and practitioners to have lucid dreams almost at will. Pioneering research conducted by Stephen LaBerge has generated and popularized various induction methods by which today most can learn to have lucid dreams.[5] Over time, many lucid dream authors, researchers, and training professionals have contributed by either promoting or elaborating on the key principles that LaBerge and his fellow researchers have proposed and studied to induce and utilize lucid dreams.[6] Despite these efforts, however, recent studies show that frequent lucid dreaming remains challenging; they might suggest that traditional induction methods, although theoretically valid, remain practically unreliable for typical users.[7] In an effort to improve these results, today's lucid dream induction research seems to be mostly invested in exploring various technological innovations (e.g., biofeedback systems, drug substances) that aim to more effectively instigate the right neurophysiological conditions for lucidity to occur during sleep.[8]

Importantly, lucid dreaming requires as much *psychological* preparation as these supportive measures and induction methods to reliably have lucid dreams.[9] Effective lucid dream induction relies on specific, preparatory cognitive and motivational skills for systematically and purposefully engaging dreams in a critical-reflective manner. As part of other psychological preparations, proficiency in prospective memory (i.e., recalling intentions upon predetermined future cues) is considered to form the hallmark of the lucid dreamer's skill set.[10] This specialized memory ability is aimed toward recognizing the typicalities of one's prospective dreams—known as *dreamsigns*—so as to remember that one is dreaming (e.g., encountering a pink flying elephant, being able to walk through walls, meeting a historical figure). If a person is unable to effectively demonstrate skill in prospective remembering by day, the likelihood of turning lucid in tonight's dreams through applying related methods of induction would be rather poor as well. Hence it is reasonable to assume that the potential effectiveness of induction methods is largely dependent on the extent to which users have already developed the required "lucid mindset" prior to attempting to induce lucid dreams using these methods.

While this logic is not new, there does seem to be a void in lucid dream research, in that researchers have not yet explicitly deconstructed the "lucid mindset" in terms of other relevant cognitive and motivational components and investigated exactly how we should account for related training. Too

often, the psychological requirements for lucid dreaming are taken for granted and not explicitly controlled for in training courses or scientific studies. Surprisingly, no significant efforts have been made yet to further research and develop the curricular support in which induction methods and the psychological preparations that these methods rely on are embedded into evidence-based lucid dream training programs. Neglecting this issue of effectiveness can easily lead to the misinterpretation of research findings. However, if addressed thoroughly, this issue can open up new research opportunities concerned with the development of more inclusive educational support to effectively train the lucid dreamers of tomorrow.

In this chapter, an attempt is made to examine existing lucid dream training, investigate the underlying theory of induction required for frequent lucid dreaming, and explore possible avenues of related educational research. Based on preliminary data gathered from an ongoing online study conducted at Snoozon.com, quantitative and qualitative data are shared that reveal curricular factors that seem to play an important role in moderating lucid dream performance. Future directions for research are suggested, and researchers and training professionals are invited to undertake further investigations concerned with the development of more effective forms of lucid dream training.

Deconstructing Lucid Dream Training

Surveys have shown that on average about one fifth of the general population reports having at least one spontaneous lucid dream per month.[11] A number of studies have been carried out to classify different personality traits of people who seem to have a natural ability for lucid dreaming. A comparative study conducted by Gackenbach showed that frequent lucid dreamers are less stressful and are more able to focus their attention as compared to the general population.[12] Lucid dream frequency is also positively related to one's search for controlling situations in waking life and related to higher levels of "need for cognition" than people who have never experienced a lucid dream before.[13]

Research conducted by LaBerge has demonstrated that the lucid dream ability is not solely reliant on natural "talent" but is, in fact, learnable. For his

doctoral dissertation in the late 1970s, when he needed to induce lucid dreams for himself on demand to record them on the polysomnograph, LaBerge devised the mnemonic induction of lucid dreams (MILD) method. After one year of practice, MILD enabled him to have 21.5 lucid dreams on average per month, with peak performances of 4 lucid dreams per night.[14]

The MILD method requires users to notice spontaneous awakenings from early morning sleep and then do the following:

1. Vividly recall and write down one's most recent dream.
2. Mentally rehearse this recalled dream while creatively rescripting the memory of it to include oneself recognizing any dreamsign pertaining to the dream and consequently visualizing oneself becoming lucid as a result,
3. Return to sleep while repeating this mental rehearsal several times, while focusing on one's intent to remember to recognize any prospective dreamsigns appearing in the following dream sleep.[15]

LaBerge claimed that around his time of practice, his level of skill enabled him to have lucid dreams virtually at will. After discontinuing his practice, his lucid dream frequency declined to about 15 lucid dreams per month, suggesting that frequent lucid dreaming requires deliberate intent and continued practice LaBerge later conducted controlled studies that have shown that MILD can be employed by others as well and can significantly (albeit moderately) improve lucid dream frequency above a baseline level.[16] LaBerge, Phillips, and Levitan additionally learned that interrupting morning sleep with periods of wakefulness before applying MILD makes lucidity even more likely to occur.[17] The impact of different lengths of wakefulness were studied and showed that subjects were significantly more likely to have a lucid dream after 30 or 60 minutes of wakefulness than after 10 minutes of being awake. While additional studies are needed to make these research findings more conclusive, applying MILD after interrupted morning sleep is currently viewed as being among the most promising means for inducing lucid dreams.[18]

Although LaBerge's lucid dream performance is encouraging and reported to have been matched by other lucid dreamers in time as well, today's online discussion boards on the topic of lucid dreaming (e.g.,

LD4all.com, Dreamviews.com, Lucidipedia.com) contain detailed personal accounts of committed lucid dream practitioners who, despite prolonged effort and sincere study of MILD, struggle to consistently increase their lucid dream frequency just beyond a few lucid dreams per month. While the previously mentioned controlled studies have demonstrated that lucid dream frequency can, indeed, be improved using MILD, there clearly seems to be more to consistently inducing frequent lucid dreams than the mere application of this procedure. As such, one might question how LaBerge and a selected group of others did manage to achieve skill in frequent lucid dreaming using MILD, given that the level of commitment and understanding of the MILD procedure was reasonably comparable between groups. What is missing? One could reason that for MILD to be effective, users are required to learn specific, preparatory cognitive and motivational skills that are not necessarily developed by typical users.

As part of the Lucidity Institute, Levitan and LaBerge produced a dedicated four-month home study training course on the topic of lucid dreaming, titled a *Course in Lucid Dreaming*™ (CLD), to train customers in the skills required for frequent lucid dreaming.[19] The course material was provided as an educational supplement to another commercial product but was later sold separately as well. Contained within the course are various structured exercises aimed at (1) developing skill in tasks that relate specifically to lucid dream induction (e.g., dream recall, dreamsign analysis, prospective remembering) and (2) better regulating their lucid dreaming routines (e.g., goal setting, performance evaluations, will development). In comparison to the practical recommendations on lucid dream induction included in LaBerge's popular book *Exploring the World of Lucid Dreaming,* CLD was the first offering to provide practitioners with a curricular structure that embedded the MILD method (and a few other related methods) into a complete training program, including educational support that aimed to help students with developing the preparatory skills required for effectively applying MILD. Unfortunately, no data on learning effects and lucid dream performance gathered from CLD practitioners have been published in the scientific literature, so one can only guess at the educational effectiveness of the course. Despite this lack of transparency for whatever reason, it is likely that customers benefited from the course and had a better chance of achieving frequent lucid dreaming compared to those who did not enjoy access to CLD and could only rely on mere method descriptions and inferior exercises.

While CLD illustrates the kind of curricular support that users would require to effectively apply methods of lucid dream induction, no experimental studies have been carried out to (1) scientifically validate and compare other existing lucid dream training programs (not mere induction methods) and (2) investigate opportunities to make curricular improvements based on performance data and scientific theories on cognitive learning. In regard to CLD's content, for example, one could question the selection of training modules covered in the course (why these and not any other likely contestants?), the particular sequential ordering of modules (why would this module come first?), and the assumed effectiveness of exercises that are implemented to help students develop the proposed preparatory skills and motivations (why would this particular exercise yield the desired skill or motivation best?). Among other questions like these, it seems as valuable to study the extent in which particular skills or motivations actually mediate lucid dreaming performance in the first place. In the service of evidence-based learning, we should set up controlled studies to compare subjects with a high-level ability in prospective memory to subjects with a relatively low-level ability, when both groups are assigned to the task of applying MILD to induce lucid dreams. Would there be any significant difference in lucid dream performance for the two groups? If so, different training modules concerned with the development of prospective memory skills could be compared to examine differences in learning gains and consequently used to make more sound judgments in the development of related, evidence-based lucid dream training. In the same experimental manner, training modules concerned with other relevant skills and motivations could be developed and validated (e.g., mental visualization, intention development, dreamsign awareness).

Thorough investigations into the development and validation of lucid dream training could also lead researchers to revisit and challenge the very theories of induction upon which this training relies. While MILD and other common induction methods sometimes seem virtually unquestionable, there remains room to continue building upon this pioneering body of research and to suggest practical and theoretical improvements or additions based on performance data and current scientific theories.

In the context of the present argument calling for more evidence-based educational research, three possible improvements are suggested here that are based on my theoretical reexamination of MILD. They serve only as illustrations relevant to the kind of investigations argued for:

1. Utilizing current theories on prospective memory to help MILD users with selecting dreamsigns that might be more suitable for the effective application of MILD.
2. Proposing a new kind of dreamsign and a related daytime training practice that might perhaps prove to be more reliable to elicit dreamsign awareness during dreaming.
3. Employing time-based rather than event-based prospective memory to more reliably elicit lucidity in dreams.

Revisiting Dreamsign Analysis

Theoretically, employing prospective memory to induce frequent lucid dreams is a common-sense induction method worth pursuing. Practically, however, subjective reports shared online cover detailed dream accounts of practitioners experiencing a range of issues related to the practical application of MILD and the successful execution of prospective memory skills. Among the most pertinent issues reported seems to be the contextual inconsistency and large variety of dreamsigns that generally exist in dreams. While it is easy to remember to recognize any future dreamsign if one has reliable knowledge about its exact future appearance and occurrence, dreamsigns seem to be quite unpredictable and exist in great diversity. Naturally, this fact hampers effective recognition. The issue is related to how memory works—specifically, to the principle of encoding and retrieval specificity. The likelihood of effective prospective remembering relies to a large degree on the supposed consistency between the expected (encoded) dreamsign by which one intends to remember that one is dreaming and the actual future dreamsign by which that intention should be recalled and executed (retrieved). While good matches between the expected and the actual dreamsign would be favorable for eliciting remembrance of one's intention to remember to turn lucid, mismatches between the two are decidedly less helpful. For example, it would be quite difficult to remember to do something when a predetermined future cue occurs if one has only ambiguous information about the cue's actual future appearance and time of occurrence, as this would likely lead to possible mismatches (e.g., "encountering some dreamsign at some moment" versus "encountering a pink flying elephant when you drive off to work").

Taking this theoretical principle into account, LaBerge recommends that

MILD users track and categorize dreamsigns from recent dreams (using a dream journal as a personal archive of detailed dream reports) according to just four categories of dreamsigns: (1) action-related dreamsigns (e.g., flying car, walking on water); (2) form-related dreamsigns (e.g., tiny dog, huge bicycle); (3) context-related dreamsigns (e.g., meeting Buddha, winning the lottery); and (4) inner-related dreamsigns (e.g., extreme fear, provoking thoughts).[20] Through the process of categorization, one should come to discover one's most frequent category of dreamsigns and, as such, narrow down the diversity to just a single category to improve dreamsign predictability. While this strategy seems helpful in theory, practitioners report that any category of dreamsigns would still include a wide range of many different sorts of dreamsigns that remain difficult to effectively predict and recognize.

It seems that LaBerge's team recognized MILD's user requirements and decided to explore ways to artificially incubate a specific, predetermined dreamsign into one's ongoing dream experience to improve dreamsign predictability and consequently increase the likelihood of its effective recognition. An ingenious invention made by LaBerge led to a commercially available device called the NovaDreamer.[21] The NovaDreamer is a computerized sleep mask that produces light stimuli above the user's eyes during rapid eye movement (REM) sleep. These stimuli will likely be naturally incorporated into the user's dream experience, resulting into more consistent and typical dreamsigns: dream events typically related to occurrences of bright light (e.g., dreaming about a bright sunrise, seeing reflections or explosions of bright light). In this way, one could instruct users to remember to recognize any future experience related to bright light as a reliable sign of dreaming.

While it was expected that using the NovaDreamer in combination with MILD (and sleep interruptions) would largely increase lucid dream frequency, results seemed to have less impact: (1) dream events evoked by the light stimuli were often not predictive enough for typical users to reliably detect, and (2) the NovaDreamer was still dependent on the user's (often underdeveloped) skill in prospective memory to be able to remember to recognize the light stimuli as signs of dreaming.[22] Based on personal accounts of lucid dreamers shared online, most lucid dreams induced through the application of MILD seem to be caused primarily by the recognition of

extremely explicit and bizarre dreamsigns (e.g., talking about lucid dreaming with someone in the dream, demonstrating extraordinary superpowers, escaping from nightmarish entities). Unfortunately, this favorable kind of dreamsign is quite rare and generally unreliable.

Research concerned with human performance in tasks of prospective memory supports the observation that explicit dreamsigns should be more easily recognized than implicit ones. McDaniel and Einstein propose that for effective prospective remembering, cues need to meet the following criteria: (1) focal, (2) distinctive, and (3) meaningfully related to the intended action.[23] In the context of lucid dreaming, the most favorable dreamsigns would theoretically (1) appear within the focal awareness of the dreamer, (2) clearly stand out from the dream environment or scenario, and (3) inherently communicate the dreamlike nature of the experience. Following this theory, one could hypothesize that the best possible dreamsign one could encounter in a dream (i.e., that with the highest probability of being recognized as a sign of dreaming) would be something similar to encountering a magic genie floating right in front of the dreamer, interrupting the dreamer from his current task in the dream, and holding up a large neon sign flashing the words "This is a dream." Nevertheless, there have been cases in which lucid dreamers were unsuccessful in recognizing these extreme dreamsigns, too.

One could imagine dedicated educational support that, for example, instructs student lucid dreamers to categorize and rank recurrent dreamsigns not according to kind, but based on which are most suitable for prospective remembering. Dreamsign analysis might then be integrated with current theories of prospective memory performance. Although this and other similar kinds of theoretical suggestions would seem minor in light of improving one's chances to induce lucid dreams, the cumulative effect on lucid dream performance, when implemented into a complete training program, together with similar improvements, could well be significant.

Extending the Notion of Dreamsigns

A second suggestion for future investigations involves the notion that effective prospective remembering requires predictable future cues. While dreamsign categorization and dreamsign incubation seem to be pragmatic approaches, one could also revisit the assumed nature of dreamsigns and question why visual signs during dreaming would be the most effective kind

of elements for triggering lucidity. Based on my personal lucid dream experience and supported by the personal reports of other frequent lucid dreamers, lucidity is surprisingly often not elicited through the recognition of the dreamlike aspects in dreams but rather of dreams—that is, merely recognizing the state or mentation of dreaming for becoming lucid. In these cases, lucid onset is generally described as "I just knew that it was a dream" or "I simply felt that I was dreaming." These state-evoked lucid dreams seem to occur most frequently among experienced lucid dreamers who have likely become familiar with the experience of dreaming and either explicitly or implicitly learned to remember to recognize the particular state of dreaming as a reliable dreamsign in itself. Although this state-specific dreamsign seems to be closely related to the "inner" kind of dreamsigns defined by LaBerge (mentioned earlier), it seems different in that it does not relate to the particular dreamlike *content* of one's thoughts or feelings but rather specifically to one's *state* of awareness. Given that the feel of the mental state of dreaming can be quite consistent throughout multiple dreams, state-based dreamsigns might better serve MILD users in comparison to content-specific dreamsigns that seem to be generally unpredictable.

An important limitation of using this alternative dreamsign in service of lucid dream induction would be the fact that inexperienced lucid dreamers might not have sufficient experience with dreaming to use the mental state of dreaming as a familiar dreamsign to recognize. Moreover, in terms of McDaniel and Einstein's memory studies, state-specific dreamsigns would not rank as suitable in light of the proposed cue features that are most favorable for effective prospective remembering (i.e., they are neither focal nor distinctive).[24]

Even so, inexperienced lucid dreamers could, in theory, develop reliable understanding and skill in recognizing the state of dreaming if a similar kind of mental state of awareness also existed in ordinary waking-life experience. One could then practice remembering to recognize this mental state of dreaming by day so as to employ the same understanding and skill during sleep to elicit state-evoked lucid dreams. Similarly, preparatory daytime practices recommended by LaBerge aim to help MILD users with developing dreamsign awareness through exercising general tasks of prospective memory.[25] LaBerge's practice requires users to recognize a variety of prospective cues during the day that are either dreamlike or predetermined randomly by the practitioner (e.g., "The next time I see a cat, I will remember

to question whether I am dreaming"). Preferably, if one is knowledgeable of one's most frequent kind of dreamsigns (i.e., action, form, context, or inner related), a similar kind of cue should be selected for the exercise to ensure consistency between the waking and dreaming context. Likewise, Levitan and LaBerge recommend NovaDreamer users to focus their daytime prospective memory training on recognizing any events specifically related to occurrences of bright light in preparation of recognizing possible light-evoked dream events generated by the NovaDreamer during sleep.[26]

Lucid Daydreaming

A possible daytime practice that might be suitable for developing skill in state-evoked lucid dreaming could be an exercise I call Lucid Daydreaming (LDD). While daydreams (i.e., vivid, spontaneous mind-wanderings during the day) do not resemble the physiological features that are unique to REM sleep, they do show psychological similarities to night dreaming that would make the state of daydreaming practically useful in the context of developing and rehearsing state-specific dreamsign awareness in preparation for state-evoked lucid dreaming. The LDD procedure is based on the assumption that if one is able to effectively recognize daydreams as signs of dreaming, one would enjoy an improved chance of successfully employing the same skill during sleep to recognize the state of night dreaming to evoke lucidity.

LDD requires practitioners to (1) notice any daydream during the day without disrupting its course, (2) visualize themselves recognizing the daydream within the ongoing daydream experience (e.g., "Hey, this is a daydream!"), (3) lucidly continue the daydream by visualizing themselves acting out their desired lucid dream intentions, and (4) when completed, return from daydreaming to ordinary wakefulness and firmly state their intention to remember to recognize the next daydream as a sign of dreaming. This exercise can be repeated many times over depending on the number of daydreams one experiences during the day. LDD also seems to be well suited as a mental exercise during sleep interruptions to instigate and rehearse lucidity in preparation for the subsequent dreaming sleep.

Based on my personal lucid dream performance using LDD and on several cases of fellow lucid dreamers who participated in small, informal studies that I conducted, LDD seemed to increase lucid dream frequency. Interestingly, LDD has been reported by some to evoke non-REM (NREM)

lucid dreams as well (based on sleep-time duration and qualitative analyses of dream reports), suggesting that daydreaming perhaps shares some similarity with NREM. Clearly, proper experimental studies are required if one would like to make any grounded claims about the possible effects of LDD on lucid dream performance. Much more needs to be said as well about the underlying assumption that lucid daydreams show epistemological similarities to or other connections with lucid dreams. Irrespective of its further validation, LDD serves as one of many possible investigations concerned with the theoretical and anecdotal reexamination of today's lucid dream induction methods to explore and research improved methods of lucid dream training.

Employing Time-Based Prospective Memory

Lastly, research concerned with prospective memory performance has shown that one can distinguish between two types of prospective memory: event-based and time-based.[27] While event-based prospective memory is triggered by any predetermined external cue or event (e.g., "When leaving home, I will take out the garbage," "When meeting my colleague tomorrow, I will congratulate him on his birthday"), time-based prospective memory requires a practitioner-initiated response at a specific predetermined *time* in the absence of any cue. Due to the unpredictability of content-specific dreamsigns, a factor that seems to negatively impact MILD performance, one could turn away from the application of event-based prospective memory entirely and investigate the possible benefits of employing time-based prospective memory for the induction of frequent lucid dreams. In contrast to event-based prospective memory, time-based prospective memory would not rely on dreamsign recognition, but rather on the duration of time—a factor that would largely operate independently of dream content. As such, lucid dream practitioners could be trained by day to specifically remember to question their mental state after any predetermined length of time and to employ the same skill after brief natural awakenings from dream sleep (e.g., "After 15 minutes, I will remember to know that I am dreaming"). Again, controlled studies could be carried out to investigate and compare the effects of event-based versus time-based methods of lucid dream induction. If the results show promise, these investigations might lead to the development of new and improved methods of lucid dream training.

The suggestions made in this section serve as examples of possible

investigations concerned with the development of improved lucid dream training. Although such theoretical explorations would naturally demand rigorous scientific scrutiny before being of any value, their collective aim is to shed light on the possible avenues of educational research open to scientific study today and they might well lead to more effective methods of lucid dream induction.

Opportunities for Online Lucid Dream Training

Lucid dream research has suffered from a significant decline of interest since the 1980s and 1990s. In contrast, public interest in lucid dreaming has expanded proportionally in the last few decades. Increasingly more websites have entered the online space to satisfy the growing global interest in lucid dreaming today. Lucid dreamers live across the world, often socially isolated from one another, yearning to gain access to credible educational content and connect to fellow lucid dreamers to share questions and experiences, and acquire further understanding and skill in lucid dreaming. Recent innovations in web technology allow for many opportunities to create interactive social networks that enable many practitioners to connect and exchange learning experiences online.

The Lucidity Institute was among the first to embrace the web to provide credible information on lucid dreaming. In addition to providing original and credible research articles and extensive FAQs (frequently asked questions) on the subject, it provided visitors with an online discussion board on which to pose related questions and share learning experiences. On these boards, a large number of users openly engage in discussions about specific topics and themes related to lucid dreaming. Other lucid dream-promoting websites soon appeared as well, but used online discussion boards as their primary means to promote lucid dreaming and inform visitors.[28] These websites have steadily expanded into vast online communities that continue to actively discuss on and cultivate an interest in lucid dreaming. While this online development should indeed be celebrated, today's web technology is becoming increasingly more advanced and suitable to not only enable online discussion, but also provide for efficient ways to conduct lucid dream research online. An exciting new frontier is coming within reach that allows

for the creation of potentially powerful online lucid dream research platforms, dedicated to providing reliable online lucid dream training and supporting related lucid dream induction research.

Attempting to make this vision a reality, I founded Snoozon to create such an online research platform.[29] Our team is pleased to collaborate with a few of today's leading lucid dream researchers to jointly explore and seize this opportunity, with the ultimate aim of contributing to the study of lucid dream induction through scientific publication. We primarily focus on studying and developing the curricular support that we believe is needed for today's most promising lucid dream induction methods, establishing a complete, evidence-based, online lucid dream training program that is open to the general public. We expect to implement many ongoing data-driven improvements over time, based on students' self-reported lucid dream performance and personal evaluations. We have already piloted the first version of Snoozon's online course and would like to share some preliminary data that we have collected from students so as to provide a glimpse of the exciting research possibilities that we anticipate.

Snoozon's Online Training Program

Complemented with online training videos, downloadable worksheets, and just-in-time mobile support through SMS messaging, we developed a commercially available, 30-day home study course in lucid dreaming. The course program includes 10 detailed lessons that structurally provide students with the practical knowledge, methods, exercises and support needed to have and apply lucid dreams, based on today's most reliable methods of lucid dream induction. The course structure is organized around three consecutive training stages: (1) preparatory training, (2) applying methods of lucid dream induction, and (3) applying methods of dream control.

In the first stage of the course, we mainly prepare students for the main practice of lucid dream induction that is covered in the second stage of the program. Preparations include, among other things, the practices of dream recall and dream journaling, ensuring healthy sleep habits, and making sure that students have established lucid dream intentions that are personally meaningful and intrinsically motivating. The second stage of the course focuses on dreamsign analysis and development of prospective memory skills for attaining dreamsign awareness both during waking and dreaming.

Together with supplemental daytime exercises, this stage leads up to the application of MILD in combination with methods of sleep interruption. Lastly, in the third stage of the course, students learn to make their initial lucid dream experiences as purposeful and enjoyable as possible, by prolonging lucid dream time, elevating their level of lucidity, manipulating dream content, and planning for specific lucid dream experiences. This final stage also provides students with directions for using lucid dreaming to improve overall psychological well-being.

The pacing of lessons is similar for every student and based on a carefully structured plan of learning (all lessons are prescheduled to be automatically sent as HTML-formatted emails). For example, some lessons in the first stage of the course simply require students to collect various tools in preparation of their training. Only a few days would be needed to gather these tools before starting with the next lesson, and we have timed those lessons accordingly. Other lessons, like those covered in the second stage of the program, demand more time to delve into, so students are given considerably more time before receiving their next lesson. In this way, students are ensured of enough time to study the lesson material and to practice methods at home without worrying too much about the pace of the course. In the introduction of each lesson, students are made aware of when they will receive the next lesson. However, they are also provided with the option to temporarily pause the course at any given moment by modifying their course settings online.

To facilitate our ongoing online study, we require students to share with us their current average hours of sleep, dream recall ability, lucid dream frequency, levels of self-efficacy and motivation with regard to their lucid dream training, and many other aspects that are relevant to the goals of particular lessons. Pertinent online feedback forms are provided with each lesson that students receive (in the first lesson, we ask students to provide general information about their prior experiences with lucid dreaming). Next to questions aimed at gathering quantitative data, we invite students to tell us about any specific challenges that they experienced when practicing induction methods or mental daytime exercises at home. This information allows us to gain more insight into the effectiveness of the course program and relate possible training issues with performance data when feedback is requested by the student.

While we have only preliminary data gathered from a few dozen students who have enrolled and completed our online course so far, the results do

seem to be promising. All students claim to have succeeded in inducing at least one lucid dream within the 30-day time frame of the course. The course content is rated as being complete and thorough, providing good instructions and overall learning support. Our SMS messaging service, which allows students to receive daily tips and just-in-time training reminders on their mobile phones, is rated as being particularly valuable ("Pssst . . . are you dreaming now?", "Have you journaled your dreams of last night yet?", "You will have a lucid dream tonight. It's written in the stars."). Looking at our current performance data, students seem to experience most trouble with (1) detecting natural awakenings from morning sleep to apply MILD and (2) preventing to fall asleep prematurely while exercising MILD. Consequently, we see students' level of self-efficacy and motivation drop significantly when required to exercise MILD (this is where some students temporarily pause the course). From these data, it seems evident that students clearly need more support with the practical application of MILD. Based on supplementary student evaluations, we are currently working on various new supportive exercises and technical aids that aim to better help students with successfully applying MILD (including improvements that have been previously suggested in the present chapter).

Taking into account other training issues and suggestions reported by students, we plan to set up experimental studies that implicitly assign students to either one of two slightly different versions of the course so as to compare and examine differences in lucid dream performance and student evaluations over time. This will allow us to experiment with new and improved training methods based on our ongoing study of actual performance data and student evaluations. We will also implement various upgrades that enable us to have a more complete view of students' progressing skill development: (1) allowing students to send in feedback concerned with not just their night-time practices but also their daytime lucid dream exercises, (2) allowing students to send in daily feedback as opposed to only once every lesson, and (3) allowing students to send in feedback even some time after completing the course to measure training retention. In light of these and other planned upgrades, we believe that this data-driven approach will lead to improved methods of lucid dream training and related scientific publications that will address many overlooked areas of lucid dream induction research.

Future Promise of Online Lucid Dream Research

While self-reports of students provide valuable information about students' progressing lucid dream performance, some studies have shown that participants' subjective judgments can be erroneous when they are asked to report occurrences of lucid dreaming.[30] As such, performance data and student evaluations gathered from students' self-reports cannot be considered strictly reliable. Ideally, students would need to own a mobile sleep laboratory at home, connect it to the Internet, and upload polysomnographic recordings to sophisticated online software that is able to objectively detect and verify occurrences of lucid dreaming in support of their subjective (lucid) dream reporting.

Although this scenario might sound far-fetched according to today's standards, recent innovations in computer hardware and software engineering are allowing for increasingly more affordable and efficient home product solutions that are capable of many of the primary functions that ordinary sleep laboratories provide. Soon, lucid dream practitioners around the world will be able to participate as research subjects in sophisticated online lucid dream studies at home by wearing specialized and comfortable sleep monitoring technology, connected to the Internet, to securely upload sleep data to lucid dream researchers on the other side of the planet. In conjunction with their subjective dream reports, these sleep data will provide lucid dream researchers with invaluable measures of lucidity and allow for the first time large-scale effect studies conducted entirely online that will largely reinvent the science and worldwide practice of lucid dreaming. In time, this will inspire the next generation of lucid dream teachers and researchers, who will once again push forward the educational frontiers of training tomorrow's lucid dreamers.

Notes

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8

Lucid Surrender and Jung's Alchemical *Coniunctio*

Mary Ziemer

I believe in the night.

—Rainer Maria Rilke[1]

Imagine a dream in which the dreamer, hiking through green hills on a sunny day, comes across a small Christian chapel with the door slightly ajar and enters. He notices that the altar, rather than holding a crucifix or statue of the Virgin Mary, as he might have expected, bears a bouquet of flowers. In front of the altar sits a yogi in the lotus posture, deep in meditation. The dreamer peers at the yogi and feels startled to realize that the yogi's face looks like his own. This recognition frightens the dreamer who awakens thinking: "Aha, so he is the one who is meditating me. He has a dream, and I am it." The dreamer has the conviction that when the yogi awakens, he will die.

The dreamer, Carl Gustav Jung, had this dream in 1944, near the age of 70. He records this dream and his thoughts on it in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, written in the years prior to his death in 1961. Although Jung describes the dream as a parable for how the self takes on the dimensions of time and space to gain "greater awareness and take a further step towards realization,"[2] he does not dwell on the heightened level of consciousness present in the dream—his awareness of the incongruities and paradoxes within the dream—an awareness that often heralds *lucidity*.

By "lucidity," I refer to our capacity to "wake up in sleep" to realize that we dream. Within dreaming, there exists a continuum of levels—or depths—of lucidity, much as the fullness of our focus and awareness can vary in waking life.[3] While our dreams may contain aspects of day residue, rehearsing, personal memory, and psychology, they can also, as Jung put forward, connect us to the sphere of the unconscious, or the Transpersonal

dimension of the psyche, which contains not only the shadowy or unknown aspects of our nature but also the more divine. The more clear, or lucid, our dreams become, the more we seem able to withdraw our subjective projections into the dream imagery. As a result, we can more directly know the numinous or spiritual qualities of the Transpersonal sphere *as our own* and, in turn, integrate and realize these qualities in our waking lives.

Jung, in fact, used the term "Transpersonal" to suggest that a realm of knowing, the "Ground of Being," supports the individual consciousness. We enter the realm of the Transpersonal when we consider questions such as the following: What makes our lives meaningful and purposeful? What seems to be the nature of reality? What makes up our essential natures? How can we bring qualities of a Greater Wisdom or the Divine into the world? Viewed from a Jungian perspective, dreams serve as bridges to the Transpersonal dimension, and, because of this, dreams can help us to answer such questions. As Jung intimates, "The dream is a little hidden door in the innermost and most secret recesses of the soul, opening into that cosmic night that was psyche long before there was any ego consciousness. . . ."[4]

The Transpersonal sphere exists "beyond" the personal and yet, paradoxically, intrinsically within our individual, personal lives. Each of us brings qualities of consciousness into the waking physical world as expressed through our own individuality. As we "wake up" to multidimensional aspects of consciousness—including vegetable, mineral, animal, human, mental, celestial, and divine—we can more fully express the attributes of an expanded consciousness both in our dreams and in our waking lives. In dreams, as Jung notes, "the inevitable one-sidedness of our conscious life is continually being corrected and compensated" and the goal of this seems "the ultimate integration of conscious and unconscious, or better, the assimilation of the ego into a wider personality."[5]

This call to widen our consciousness and "wake up" to a greater wisdom and deeper love echoes throughout wisdom traditions. We can carry this injunction into our sleep and "wake up in sleep" by becoming lucid or aware that we dream. Through lucidity, we can withdraw our projections into the dream content, and, I would suggest, by aligning our personal will with the Highest Will[6] or the "Real Will of the soul,"[7] recognize the dream not only as an illusion or creation of our minds, but also potentially as the presence of spirit, a greater consciousness, or new dimensions of consciousness.

While Jung metaphorically acknowledged our capacity to "wake up" in dreams to a fuller sense of our humanity and divinity, he apparently chose not to confirm a literal understanding of "waking up in sleep" through the practice of lucidity. However, he did advocate the idea of bringing consciousness to the dream by reentering the dream while in the waking state through a technique he called *Active Imagination*. In this technique, the dreamer, now fully awake, reengages with the dream characters and images through dialogue, role-play, and art, working more consciously—or *lucidly*—with the unconscious content under the guidance of a therapist in an analytical process.

Interestingly, returning to the opening dream of the yogi, we can notice that, at the moment in the dream when lucidity could potentially open up—with Jung's recognition of his own face—Jung feels startled into waking consciousness. At this juncture, Jung, as many of us do in dreams, takes his fear of death literally. Perhaps, had he taken an analytical position toward his own feelings in the dream, he would have linked his sense of impending "death" to the death of an outmoded way of being or aspect of consciousness, an ego death, required as a rebirth or awakening into a new realization about himself and the nature of reality as well as dreams. In doing so, he would have withdrawn his projection into the yogi and, as a result, we can imagine that he would have "woken up" to a lucid experience.

Although Jung did not report lucidity in his dream of the yogi, his dream reports from the same period in 1944 suggest that he had apparently experienced lucid states. At that time, as a result of a heart attack, for three weeks Jung hovered between life and death. During his illness, he had a series of what he refers to as "visions" that share many characteristics of full lucidity: the ecstatic realization of having capacities beyond those of time- and space-bound consciousness as well as a unitive experience characterized by nontemporality, inner alignment (Beingness), and metacognition (Knowing).

Jung's visionary reports also suggest that he had realized an integration of his waking and dreaming selves as well the "spiritual self," an essential characteristic of full lucidity as described by a number of lucid dreamers.[8] We could assume from such visionary descriptions that Jung actually did have transcendent lucid dreams, but as the term had not yet entered public discourse, he called them "visions" to differentiate them from regular dreams.

Significantly, these visions ultimately gave Jung the will to say "yes" to the conditions of existence. From this "yes" emerged his comprehensive study *The Mysterium Coniunctionis*: *An Inquiry into the Separation and Synthesis of Psychic Opposites in Alchemy*.

Jung describes the Knowing characteristic of his visions as an *objective cognition*, an awareness that allows him to truly apprehend inner wholeness. Jung's awareness in the visions engenders an expansion of his consciousness and fuels his desire to recover from his heart attack so as to bring the qualities of the visionary encounters into "the box mentality" of everyday manifestation.[9] To my mind, Jung's objective cognition sounds similar to the lucid dreamer's ability to withdraw the projections of psychic contents into the dream content as well as the lucid dreamer's capacity to align her consciousness with a Higher Will, opening up the possibility of directly apprehending the qualities of the Transpersonal sphere. As with Jung, this apprehension then inspires the dreamer to bring those magical and mysterious qualities into waking physical reality. Jung likens the unitive feeling-tone present in his visions to the alchemical idea of the *coniunctio*, meaning reconciliation of psychological opposites.

The *Coniunctio* Consciousness of Objective Cognition and Lucidity

Jung's series of lucid visions inspired the theme that he spent the final years of his life writing about: the alchemical *coniunctio*. Alchemically, this recombination of two elements—or two psychic opposites—to form a new substance suggests the inner marriage, the *coniunctio*, of a more fully integrated personality. In Jung's own visions, the alchemical *coniunctio* actually takes the form of a cross-culture series of marriages: the mystic marriage of the Kabbalistic tradition; the marriage of Christ, the lamb, with the Church; and the marriage of the gods, or *hierosgamos*, in Greco-Roman culture. What got "married up" in Jung's psyche? Jung supplies the answer: "At the bottom it was I myself: I was the marriage. And my beatitude was that of a blissful wedding."[10]

An initiatory vision opens Jung's series of lucid *coniunctio* dreams: he

believes he sees Earth from space and then finds himself before an immense "dark block of stone, like a meteorite." Passing through temple gates, Jung endures a painful ego death, an annihilation that strips away all the characteristics of his personal self, leaving him with a feeling of "extreme poverty, but at the same time of great fullness." With this, he recognizes that he has come through this annihilation into a more cosmic state: "I had everything that I was, and that was everything."[11] His description sounds similar to "superlucidity," the highest level of the lucid dreaming spectrum according to writer Ed Kellogg, or even to enlightenment.[12]

Jung insists that he felt the visions that followed as "utterly real," not imagined; in fact, they seemed so real, they made waking reality appear imprisoning, a boxed-in, three-dimensional form of consciousness bounded by limitation. He recalls: "There was a *pneuma* of inexpressible sanctity in the room, whose manifestation was the *mysterium coniunctionis*,"[13] which can be called a sense of inner union with an archetype of the divine.

Because Jung had withdrawn his projections into the numinous, god-like dream objects, he could recognize their qualities as his own. This sense of mysterious union with the divine qualities in our being offers an antidote to the idea of the divine as the *mysterium tremendum*, an alien power outside of us that seems so "wholly other" we tend to perceive it as a terrifying, tremendous, unknowable mystery.[14] Jung observes that such an encounter is experienced as a defeat or death for the ego.[15] To this point, Jung adds the realization that although the numinous may at first be felt as "wholly other" because of our estrangement from it, it is none other than a reflection of the fully realized self in each of us—the fullness of being. Dreams, as Jung understood them, help us reconcile the opposing views of the Divine Mystery, moving us toward a more unitive understanding of consciousness. Similarly, lucid dreamer and researcher Gregory Scott Sparrow describes an elevated lucid state as "a level of consciousness at which the individual is unified with a force of such overwhelming proportions that he feels melted by it and lifted immeasurably beyond his normal state of consciousness."[16]

It seems noteworthy that Jung attributes the freedom to share his own visions to his close call with death in waking life. In tandem with this, he also felt the freedom to surrender himself to "the current of his own thoughts" that flowed out in a productive period of work before his death in 1961.[17] Based on this observation, we can wonder if Jung remained reticent about lucid

dreaming in part because of professional concerns, as, within the context of mainstream psychology, lucid dreaming seemed paradoxical and unscientific.

Did Jung know about the pioneering 1867 work of Hervey de Saint Denys, who in his *Dreams and How to Guide Them* explored his own dreams from a lucid point of view? Or did he come across the 1917 work of Frederic Van Eeden, who receives credit for naming the phenomenon of the "lucid dream" and whose name appears in the bibliography of early editions of Sigmund Freud's *An Interpretation of Dreams*?[18] We do not know, but this historical context could have allowed Jung to focus on his own "lucid" visions as a point of reference.

Reflecting on his own realization of an objective cognition in which he actually withdrew his projections into the visionary images and so became free to identify with their essential nature, Jung makes a striking claim: "Only through objective cognition is the real *coniunctio* possible."[19] If we substitute the word "lucidity" for "objective cognition," this statement gives us an idea of the affinity between the fully lucid state and the state of consciousness Jung describes.[20]

Jung's statement takes on added resonances when one keeps in mind that "Eros," in Jung's view, "is a *kosmogonos*, a creator and father-mother of all higher-consciousness."[21] From a Transpersonal perspective, Jung describes this as surrendering to a "cosmogonic love"—the love from which the cosmos originated. The term alludes to the Orphic belief that Eros, the god of love, emerged from an egg produced by Night and Chaos (or the Void). When the egg broke open, half formed heaven and half formed earth, making Eros (love) the origin of the cosmos. "For we are all," Jung goes on to emphasize, "in the deepest sense the victims and instruments of cosmogonic 'love.' "[22]

Importantly for Jung, Eros and Logos align or "marry up" in his visions, furthering his own *Individuation*, the lifelong developmental process of integrating the varied and fractured elements of one's personality into a functional "whole." If Jung himself received such an "uprush of life" from his own seemingly lucid states, this begs the question: Why did he not overtly promote such dreaming during the remainder of his life? Looking back, apart from Jung's possible professional concerns about "lucid" dreaming, we can only deduce or approximate his philosophical response toward lucidity from his more direct statements about dreams.

The Lucid Paradox: Can an Unconscious Dream Seem Conscious?

Jung fondly noted that he did not dream but that he was dreamed, that he did not live but was lived.[23] He saw dreams as spontaneous products of the unconscious and, as such, completely natural, open, true, and incapable of deceit or of conscious control. For Jung, the dream's innocence comes from its freedom from ego consciousness and will, which appear weakened in the dream state. As a consequence, in Jung's view, the dream does not lie. The dream has an inner truth and honestly reflects to us the truth about ourselves, rather than the truth we want to believe of ourselves. The dream tells it "as it is."[24]

Some 10 years prior to his dream of the yogi in the church, Jung had observed that a dream "reflects not on the ego but on the self; it recollects that strange self, alien to the ego, which was ours from the beginning, the trunk from which the ego grew. It is alien to us because we have estranged ourselves from it through the aberrations of the conscious mind."[25] Jung defines the "self" as "the totality of conscious and the unconscious psyche,"[26] viewing the dream as being "specifically an utterance of the unconscious."[27] By extension, we can assume that Jung may have felt wary of "lucidity" because the presence of consciousness in the dream state leaves the door open for ego-based psychological distortions such as inflation and arrogance as well as the predominance of the logical mind.

Perhaps, then, Jung downplayed the potential of lucidity out of a concern that the dream would no longer reflect the self, but the ego, rather than a wider personality. From a Jungian perspective, the idea of "conscious dreaming" might seem oxymoronic or a contradiction in terms, especially given that Jung said of dreams: "They are the facts from which we must proceed."[28] Perhaps Jung would have taken some comfort in findings, such as those presented by Allan Hobson, that suggest lucid dreaming is a measurable brain state incorporating both aspects of the waking and dream states.[29]

Nonetheless, from a psychological perspective, Jung directly warned against a "hubris of consciousness," expressed in the statement that "Nothing

is greater than man and his deeds."[30] Moreover, he viewed this "hubris" as one of the greatest threats to the planet and humanity. Because of this threat, Jung cautions against Eastern practices such as yoga being applied by Westerners as a means of gaining ego power. Such a practitioner, rather than experiencing liberation from the constraints of the ego, could either simply reinforce his or her spiritual pride or be overwhelmed by the unconscious contents of the psyche. This caution could also be extended to the dream yoga of lucid dreaming.

Speaking of the Western individual who, at the time, stood on the verge of entering a world war, Jung said, "It is infinitely more important to strip him of the illusion of his power than to strengthen him still furthering the mistaken idea of everything he wills." Jung continues, "What he lacks is conscious recognition of his inferiority to the nature around and within him."[31]

Such thoughts came out of dream Jung had in 1913, in which he kills a recurrent dream figure: a blond, idealized youth named Siegfried. The act fills Jung with disgust and remorse, feelings that linger upon his waking from the dream. Lying in bed, reflecting on the dream, Jung feels seized by an urgent need to understand the dream's intent. At this point, he hears a voice say, "If you do not understand the dream you must kill yourself."

Reflecting on the dream, Jung recognizes that Siegfried represents an attitude characterized by an imposing willfulness. "The dream," Jung explains, "showed that the attitude embodied by Siegfried, the hero, no longer suited me. Therefore it had to be killed. . . . This identity and my heroic idealism had to be abandoned, for there are higher things than the ego's will, and to these one must bow."[32] Jung's desire to constrain his own hubris, as well as that of humanity, may have restrained his openness about lucidity. His concerns might also help to explain his apparent hesitancy to consider lucid dreaming as way of integrating the latent potential not only in our individual natures but also in the nature of the Self, or Consciousness, in the "process of becoming."[33] Nonetheless, his memoirs outline his own increasing capacity for such visionary, lucid states.

The Dream Magic of Alchemy

Whether dreams were ordinary or visionary, nonlucid or lucid, Jung proposed that they possessed the potential to revitalize our waking lives through an "uprush of life"—the developmental process of Individuation. Jung looked to dreams and alchemical emblems as a way to track this inner development. Alchemy has generally been understood as the as search for the magical "philosopher's stone" or the elixir that would turn lead into gold; however, in such processes, Jung saw the outlines of an inner alchemy in which the dross matter of our lives is transformed into the gold of a true personality.

From a Jungian point of view, the philosopher's stone represents an archetype of the self.[34] "Its phenomenology," Jung writes, "is exemplified in mandala symbolism, which portrays the self as a concentric structure. . . . The structure is invariably felt as the representation of a central state or of a centre of personality essentially different from the ego."[35] The self is manifested in numinous archetypes associated with divine qualities such as harmony, beauty, and balance, communicated by abstract geometric forms such as the squaring of the circle as well as the mystery of the divine suggested by the divine child, a cloud, or whirlwind. The Jungian approach views archetypes of the self as sharing the function of the alchemical stone—awakening within us an awareness of inner gold or inner light and inspiring us to bring this inner light into the outer world. Through the *Mysterium Coniunctionis*—inner union with an archetype of the self or the Divine—the new synthesis of body, soul, and spirit becomes "fixed" in the dreamer's psyche.

Jung noted that alchemists throughout history staked their souls—and lives—on "the transcendental purpose of producing a *unity*," reconciling, in the alchemical stage of *coniunctio*, both physical and psychic opposites—mind, body, soul, and spirit—through a symbolic, unitive illumination within the individual psyche.[36] But, in contrast to this ultimate aim of alchemy, Jung points out that "the psychological interpretation (foreshadowed by the alchemists) points to the concept of human wholeness . . . bridging over a dissociation between conscious and unconscious."[37]

The alchemical hermaphrodite acts as an outward image of this inner unity within the psyche. The hermaphrodite, depicted as being equally male and female, actually transcends gender and, to Jung, represents both the alchemical "royal marriage" of the united body—of nonduality—and the individual psyche united with, and in the service of, a larger Transpersonal awareness. An illustration from the 16th-century alchemical treatise

Rosarium Philosophorum (*The Rosary of the Philosophers*) shows the hermaphrodite standing clothed in new, magnificent garments of gold, red, white, and black, outwardly depicting the garments of inner splendor that metaphorically clothe the transformed psyche. In its very form, the hermaphrodite illustrates the subjective qualities of what Jung calls the capacity for "paradoxical wholeness"—an ability to maintain inner unity in multiplicity. Through the sense of inner balance and harmony contained in its form, the hermaphrodite also suggests a position more in line with a Transpersonal Will.[38]

Understood from an alchemical perspective, dreams can be seen to act as miniature alchemical emblems or ideograms depicting various stages in our movement toward Individuation. Again, from a Jungian point of view, the human capacity to imagine—which includes the concentration, cognition, and creativity expressed in dreams—acts as a bridge between the inner and outer worlds as well as between the worlds of thinking and feeling, not only helping us to "see" who we truly are, but also enabling consciousness to "see" or know itself through manifestation.[39]

The Four Stages of the Alchemical Art

Let us ground this rather abstract discussion by focusing on the earthy, alchemical art of perfumery. Consider the white rose. On the physical plane, alchemists, fascinated by the fact that it takes 800 pounds of rose petals to create 1 pound of rose concentrate, linked the art of perfumery to the freeing of the soul's essence from the body. Alchemists enacted the great, sacred art of making "the fixed volatile and the volatile fixed," of making matter spirit and spirit matter. This concept is also expressed in a key alchemical saying: "As above, so below," suggesting correspondences between the outer and inner worlds.

Perfumery provided alchemists with an apt vehicle for analogously describing such correspondences. As an art, perfumery can be broadly grouped into four stages: to separate, to dissolve, to recombine, and to fix. First, separate the rose petals from the flower's stem; second, dissolve or break down the petals through a process of distillation by heating them in a chemical solution; third, recombine the extracted essence with a tincture to

create a new fragrance; and fourth, "fix" the perfume's ephemeral scent so the fragrance lingers longer in the world, making a deep impression on those who encounter it.[40]

These generalized stages of the alchemical art provide a simplified framework for understanding how Jungian and transpersonal psychologies view the Individuation process. Essentially, we first must separate out from our unconscious our identification with the world around us—our conditioning, complexes, and cultural patterns—and learn to live more consciously, more lucidly. This process involves dissolving the ego, undergoing an ego death, often initiated by a life situation to which the ego must surrender, such as a crisis, loss, or love. The shattering, emotional power of such crises breaks down our ego identification, causing us to question our sense of self and our life's meaning.

In the waking world, a Transpersonal therapist would view the breakdown-to-breakthrough process as an essential aspect of human growth and a way to open up inner potential. Seen in this light, circumstances that cause the usual ego identifications to loosen or to break open the heart are viewed as positive in developmental terms—even if painful—because they increase the capacity both to feel more deeply and to hold paradoxical perspectives.

Thus, what we perceive as a crisis—a job loss, bereavement, or relationship breakup, for example—becomes an opportunity for inner growth and creative life change. Also, what we perceive as positive life events, such as having a child or falling in love, can shatter normal ego identifications. Through such experiences of ego death, we awaken to a more expansive way of being.

Viewed psychologically, the self-knowledge gained by responding to such situations expands one's sense of self and view of the world as well as the capacity to hold paradoxical positions in balance. In the midst of outer change, through dreams, the psyche may open to the more mysterious and magical aspects of the unconscious, thereby facilitating inner transformation. This moment has great significance for inner wholeness, because as Jung claims, "In fact it is the approach to the numinous that is the real therapy. In as much as you attain an experience of the numinous you are released from the curse of pathology."[41] Ultimately, for the Individuation process to be complete, it must be "fixed" through transformative action in the waking

world.

Normally, this four-stage process may require long periods of time for the individual and collective psyche to integrate into the waking world. As Jung demonstrated, we can facilitate this process by using our creative imagination to work with the psychic contents contained within the dream symbols. Jung's own visions also suggest this. Indeed, although Jung does not directly say so, he would likely acknowledge that through lucid dreaming, we can theoretically facilitate this process because we can more consciously integrate new aspects of being. For instance, some lucid dreamers report shape changing, taking on new bodily forms, and experiencing the corresponding forms of consciousness that enhance their waking-world sense of self and capabilities.[42]

Introducing Lucid Surrender

Lucid Surrender, a transcendent state within the "lucidity continuum," moves the dreamer's consciousness toward integrating feeling, thinking, and knowing, toward "absolute lucidity" or "superlucidity," as lucid dream theorist Ed Kellogg has described, into an awareness of *Being* or fully integrated consciousness.[43] In my alchemical reading of Lucid Surrender, the process of separating, dissolving, recombining, and fixing (from breakdown to breakthrough), which can take years in waking physical reality, can be greatly accelerated as the psyche undergoes this process inwardly within a single dream. How? Significantly, in Lucid Surrender the ego-based, day-to-day consciousness becomes transformed through contact with what feels like new dimensions of being and an inner alignment with the Highest Will. Additionally, in Lucid Surrender, the dreamer can realize four central principles of Jung's analytical approach key to Individuation: withdrawal of psychic projections, objective cognition, surrender, and integration. As a result, the dreamer moves toward more fully becoming in the waking world, transforming the world in the process.

Jung ends the "late thoughts" in his autobiography with a reflection upon the relationship of the individual to a more transpersonal, "cosmogonic love":

> Man can try to name love, showering upon it all the names at his command, and still he will

> involve himself in endless self-deceptions. If he possesses a grain of wisdom, he will lay down his arms and name the unknown by the one unknown, *ignotum per ignotius*—that is, by the name of God. That is a confession of his subjection, his imperfection, and his dependence; but at the same time a testimony to his freedom to choose between truth and error.[44]

Essentially, Jung's autobiography ends where we now begin.

In Lucid Surrender, the dreamer has the potential to fulfill Jung's criteria of withdrawing projections and surrendering to the Transpersonal, realizing "objective cognition" so as to know "cosmogonic love." As a result, the lucid dreamer can consciously partake of the psycho-spiritual healing of the alchemical *coniunctio*, engendered by the separation and synthesis of opposites, along with the transformative power this opens up in the dreamer's psyche and waking world.

How can we understand Lucid Surrender? The following dream, taken from my own dream cycle, serves as a symbolic response to this question:

> *Turning to the left on a city street in a dream, I see that hundreds of hanging heart crystals of various sizes catch and radiate white light. The stunning beauty of this display brings lucidity. Again, as I bow my head in surrender, the dreamscape falls away and the black winds and light lift my being onto the blackness.*
>
> *This time, it feels as if I swim horizontally in a stream of black wind and light like a fish that seems suspended in a different dimension as it swims against a gentle current. This current suffuses my being with both delicate pleasure and purification, reminding me vaguely of a "Good Death."*[45] *It feels like taking a bath in God. And, again I wonder if this happens to each of us every night but we just don't usually remember . . .*
>
> *Then I again find myself semi-lucid in a dream where a matronly woman sits in her rocking chair before a fire. I rest at her feet, curled up on a braided rug, taking in the experiences of the lucid reality. The woman seems very puzzled and almost impatient as she says to me, "What kind of lucid dreams are those when you let yourself be taken to God in this way?" I tell her, "Surrender, the Path of Surrender." With that I awake feeling very tired and still.*

Jung at the Threshold of the Doors of Perception

So, how might Jung have experienced and reflected upon Lucid Surrender? To answer this question, let us reenter the opening dream of the yogi and imagine that, when Jung sees his own face in that of the yogi, instead of being startled into waking consciousness, he recognizes the yogi as an aspect of himself in a dream. We even go so far as to imagine that the yogi then wakes up in the dream. Contrary to Jung's fears, Jung does not die when this

happens; instead, he wakes up to become lucid as the blue-eyed yogi gazes calmly back at him.

Fully aware that he dreams, Jung now has the ability to choose. At this juncture, he might engage in some conscious active imagination with the yogi. He could ask the yogi what he meditates on or what he represents. He might decide to fly away from the yogi to see what appeared. He could decide on any numerous responses to lucidity. For the sake of argument, let us agree that as Jung recognizes the yogi as an aspect of himself, he also becomes aware that he has enacted the first step of psycho-spiritual healing in analytical psychology: he has consciously withdrawn his psychic projection into the world of forms. Psychologically, this moment in which Jung, through lucidity, becomes aware of his unconscious identification with the dream's contents corresponds to the separation of the opposites in alchemy.

In separating out the dream contents from his awareness, Jung would thus take the first step in realizing the import of his own words: "it is essential to withdraw these projections in order to attain to oneself and to objectivity. . . . Objective cognition lies hidden behind the attraction of the emotional relationship; it seems to be the central secret. Only through objective cognition is the real *coniunctio* possible."[46] As Jung understood, the alchemical flask where the *coniunctio* takes place actually seems within the dreamer's psyche.

Within the individual psyche, the *coniunctio* gives birth to a universal consciousness, one that frees the dreamer—and consciousness itself—from an identification with the forms through which consciousness manifests, transcending and integrating all levels of existence.[47] According to Jung's own teachings, however, the ego-based psyche must first acknowledge its limitations and surrender to a more Suprapersonal Awareness or Higher, Transpersonal Will.

At this point in the Lucid Surrender process, rather than taking direct action, we assume Jung decides to follow his own advice and "lays down his arms," surrendering to the Transpersonal awareness that opens up before him in the lucid dream. He recognizes the dream as an expression of a Greater Consciousness. In response, perhaps he bows his head in a spontaneous symbolic gesture of a voluntary ego death, whether the prayerful attitude of a monotheistic tradition or the meditative lotus posture of a Tibetan Buddhist monk. Either way, in acknowledging and aligning himself with a

consciousness more expansive than his own, he has potentially opened his being to the psychic processes outlined in the alchemical *coniunctio*.

In surrendering, Jung might well recall an image of the alchemist on his knees before the Great Alchemist in H. C. Khunrath's 1604 emblem of the alchemist's study, the "*Amphitheatrum sapientiae aeternae*" ("The Amphitheater of Eternal Wisdom"). And, like the alchemist who with a sword cuts through the illusions of the world of forms, Jung, in recognizing his projections into the yogi, metaphorically slices through his ego consciousness, his cultural conditioning, to align himself with what he would refer to as the "Ground of Being."

If we recollect Jung's fear that he would die if the yogi woke up, we can say that, on a feeling level, his intuition seems correct. Psychically, his own ego position would have to die for Jung to make the conscious shift to full lucidity. In Lucid Surrender, he would need to take this ego death to even further depths, by surrendering his own conscious will to a Higher or Transpersonal Will within the dream. This surrendering "is not a loss of unique individuality. Instead it is a surrender in which your old, mistaken notion of personal identity dies, and what is resurrected is your authentic identity—your individuality."[48]

Breaking down to Break through to the Other Side

From an alchemical perspective, the individual soul must first know itself as existing beyond the limitations of the body-based ego and become "recombined" with the spirit. Psychotherapeutically, this process of breaking down the personal ego goes hand in hand with the second stage of the alchemical process or perfumery—namely, the dissolving, meaning here the dissolution of the ego to open the individual's consciousness to a more cosmic or universal awareness. Jung explains that the purpose of this separation and dissolving process "was to free the mind from the influence of 'bodily appetites and the heart's affections,' and to establish a spiritual position which is supraordinate to the turbulent sphere of the body. . . . Modern psychotherapy makes use of the same procedure when it objectifies the affects and instincts and confronts consciousness with them."[49]

To this point, the Jungian analyst Edward Edinger adds that the "death of

the body" means the "the death of the concrete level of human existence, the level of *participation mystique*" of one's culturally conditioned worldview.[50] The ego effectively feels "dissolved" or "broken down," and becomes less defensive and more open to the transpersonal dimension. The heart breaks open. This dissolution or opening prepares the ground for a new synthesis, a new way of being, to be "recombined" and "fixed" in the psyche. In lucidity, we have the potential to "die" and escape the seeming limitations of our physical body and to wake up to the Higher Mind; then, if we surrender our minds to a Higher Will, we "die" to the realm of mind and wake up to the world of soul and spirit.[51]

Returning to Jung's dream of the yogi, the dissolving of the ego can be seen to constitute a fundamental characteristic of Lucid Surrender. With Jung's initiatory ego death, the yogi, the dreamscape, and Jung's dreambody might have dissolved, giving way to a black light and black winds. In this case, Jung, ever the alchemist, would likely have the presence of mind to recognize this event as the alchemical "death of the four elements"—that is, the death of the known and the opening of the gateway to the unknown. In his mind, Jung might hear the words from the 16th-century alchemist Gerard Dorn, whose work figures so centrally in Jung's *Mysterium Coniunctionis*: "Oh happy gate of blackness, cries the sage, which are the passage to this so glorious change."[52]

In the emergent black light and winds, Jung could recognize the Eastern Tibetan Buddhist's goal of a contentless consciousness or the "dazzling blackness" of the Christian mystic St. John of the Cross. Of the winds, Jung could recall: "The Latin words *animus*, Spirit, and *anima*, Soul, are the same as the Greek *anemos*, wind. . . . There is quite a similar connection with the Greek *psyche*, which is related to *psycho*, to breath, *psychos*, cool. . . . terms linking the soul to the movement of air and a 'breath-body.' "[53]

In my own Lucid Surrender dreams, when the dreambody seemingly dissolves on the cooling, black light and winds, it feels like what the alchemists describe: the soul becomes free of the body—the spiritualization of matter.[54] Depending on my state of mind, I have found that this dissolving process can feel like either an ecstatic death dominated by Eros or an annihilative sensation dominated by a feeling of mortification. The black light and winds can hit the dreamer's psyche with a force that one might liken to breaking the sound barrier, akin to the power held in a tsunami, tornado, or

torrential flood—a nuclear kind of energy. If the dreamer can retain his or her focus and ride the rush of energy, moving through the personal emotions of ecstasy or fear and containing the energetic fires heating up the alchemical flask of the psyche, then a more serene state of awareness emerges. Initially, however, this stage can feel as if a magnetic force operates within this black light, one that in my own experiences I attribute to the pull or the power of the spirit's attraction, pulling the lucid dreamer's being forward at hyperspeeds. Sometimes, when I have almost become lost in the ecstatic bliss or fear, a voice reminds me, "It's not this," and then I recollect my focus by repeating a holy name or singing a sacred song repeatedly.

I have found that music plays a central role in Lucid Surrender by focusing the mind and helping the dreamer maintain the one-pointed, heart-centered focus on the Highest Will requisite for entering the depths of lucidity. A Latin inscription on a table in the alchemist's study illustrates an axiom of the Lucid Surrender approach: "Sacred music disperses melancholy and evil spirits." This brief excerpt from a Lucid Surrender dream that I experienced called "The Celestial Realm" illustrates how music can stabilize the dreamer's focus:

> *Then again, as I pray, [I] feel the pull as my being is taken onto the black winds. [I] feel a bit unshielded because I have been so caught up in my mind of late and the prayers have been uneasy. A song arises in my being and comforts me: "You are my hiding place, you always fill my heart with songs of deliverance whenever I feel afraid, I will trust in you, I will trust in you, let the weak say I am strong in the strength of your love." The song repeats a few times as my being feels carried at light speed on the black . . . Then, the descent down a spinning vortex lined concentrically with white laser beams of light. The beauty and my singing distract me from my fear. I surrender to the descent, but with some trepidation because of the great force. Eventually, the movement slows. . . .*

Descending into the Depths of the Unconscious

Based on my own Lucid Surrender experiences, I connect the powerful sensation of "descent," often marked by passing through a hexagonally shaped tunnel or moving into a spinning vortex, to a subjective sensation of moving into the depths of the unconscious, the depths of soul, or more deeply inward. This shift in the psyche's orientation may translate into the sensation of a steep descent or a disorienting, accelerated journey on the blackness, as if one's being plunges down a waterfall at the edge of the universe or seems

caught up in a whirlwind. Psychologically, the dreamer has entered the realm of what James Hillman, the prominent Jungian analyst, called "soul-making," with the soul being the unknown psychic element that imparts meaning and sacredness to reality. Hillman equates the soul with depth—depth of experience and depth of feeling. Thus, metaphorically, "the direction of soul travel is downwards."[55] Traditionally, the shaman or archetypal hero also descends into the underworld to encounter archetypes that imbue healing powers.

Interestingly, in Jung's memoirs, he describes his own imaginative alchemical descent during the period in his life, after his break with Freud, in which he set out to voluntarily confront the unconscious, a confrontation he conceived of as a scientific experiment. Reflecting on that experiment some 60 years later, he observes, "Today I might equally well say that it was an experiment which was being conducted on *me*."[56] Jung felt this experiment uncovered the personal myth by which he lived and resulted in his *Red Book*. He recalls the date on which this experiment took a decisive turn: December 12, 1913, during Advent—symbolically, a season he viewed as announcing the birth of the Christ spirit deep within. On this day, as Jung relates:

> I was sitting at my desk once more, thinking over my fears. Then I let myself drop. Suddenly it was as though the ground literally gave way beneath my feet, and I plunged down into dark depths. I could not fend off a feeling of panic. But then, abruptly, at not too great a depth, I landed on my feet in a soft, sticky mass.[57]

In Jung's account, a profound visionary sequence follows, involving the hero and solar myths. Subsequently, Jung uses the waking dream technique of imagining a steep descent, making numerous attempts to get to the "bottom" of the unconscious, a descent he likens to a voyage to the moon or a descent into empty space.[58]

Jung's idea of making an imaginative descent into the unconscious seems a visualization of the alchemical injunction *Visita Interiorem Terrae Rectificando Invenies Operae Lapidem*, written as the acronym V. I. T. R. O. L. and translated by Kurt Seligman, author of *The Mirror of Magic*, as "Explore the inner things of Earth and by distillation you will find the hidden stone."[59] The "Earth" in this context represents the individual as a microcosm.

The Numinous Synthesis: The "Greening" of the Psyche

The completion of the descent demarks the end of the dissolving, purifying process in Lucid Surrender and the beginning of what alchemists viewed as the "recombining," in which the unified soul and spirit reunite with the dreamer's "new" subtle-energy body: a marrying up that represents the synthesis of opposites within the psyche. In terms of the psyche, the new "body" of the transformed ego has the capacity to consciously contain and realize unconscious potential—represented by the hermaphrodite. Edinger explains the Jungian take on this process from a psychological point of view:

> That means that everything that one had to disassociate from at the previous stage has to be reincorporated at a new level of consciousness. You have to do everything you did before, let the same energies back in, but they are altogether different because they're accompanied by consciousness. In effect those energies and their source have undergone a death and rebirth. They've been regenerated. First they've been killed and then they've been reborn.[60]

We can note a parallel process in a dream: when we become conscious or lucid, the dream might seem "the same," while also "altogether different." To me, in Lucid Surrender, this teaching is known experientially as the "body" of the psyche that has undergone voluntary ego death becoming resurrects or wakes up in the psychic or subtle-energy body: a revitalized, purified dreambody with capacities transcending or expanding on those of the physical body. Alchemically speaking, we can think of this new body as the alchemical philosopher's stone, the foundation upon which a new personality structure can be built.

At this point in Lucid Surrender, after the purifying descent, the movement generally stills, opening up into a silent, hushed space out of which new forms and even worlds and knowledge may emerge. Having undergone a rather literal, inward death, and purification, the psyche can receive the presence of the *numinousum*, the archetype of the self that makes a deep, transformative impression on the psyche. Here, in my imagined experience of Jung's Lucid Surrender, he might find himself incarnated within a new dreambody, standing up on his feet, ready to face the content of the unconscious much as he did in his imaginative descents.

In this stage of the *coniunctio*, the united and purified body-soul-spirit has become ready to wake up to cosmic union, a profound encounter with wholeness.[61] As Edinger explains, "the death of the ego is a necessary prelude to theophany"[62]—an archetypal manifestation of the divine.

The following image from another Lucid Surrender dream that I received reflects such a theophanic quality:

> *I awake in the night and pray. [I] repeat the holy names. Suddenly in a dream, I find myself in a garden talking to a man sitting opposite me. There aren't enough flowers around, so I think: "Let there be flowers." When flowers don't appear, I feel surprised because, after all, this seems a dream. With this, lucidity comes, and, as the dreamscape and my dreambody fall away, my being gets carried very hard and fast on the black winds, leaving me breathless. The movement seems so powerful, it feels hard for me to locate a sense of the sacred. Instead my mind simply tracks the experience: Here's the black light, here are the geometric forms of light, here is a sea of crystal light formations, here is the black again. Then comes a stunning downward movement through the black that slows as the soles of my "feet" touch the ground. The sensation feels indescribably lovely, as if I've been gently set on soft forest duff that communicates with my soul. On the black expanse appears a large deep blue circle of light. The circle reminds me of a fountain's base but without a central form in the middle. As I wait, cylindrical shafts of deep blue shoot up from the circle's center. These turn to green as they break into a million shining drops of light. The green drops wash through my being like a blessing. I feel a deep desire to weep tears for the beauty, for the unarticulated knowing communicated in the green. It seems a shame that I appear alone in this experience. If only others could share in it! There comes a deep longing to share the green. . . .*

This desire "to share the green"—to share the qualities of the encounter in waking life—serves as a hallmark of the spiritual self in dreams.[63] While archetypes of the self appear in nonlucid dreams and lucid dreams, I would suggest that the inner attitude of Lucid Surrender and the impression of ego death it engenders facilitate such encounters.

The Secret of Surrender and the Analytical Process

Along with the image of the hermaphrodite, Jung linked the ultimate aim of the *coniunctio* to the image of the alchemical "sun and moon tree," a tree that bears the fruit of little suns and moons—that is, the fruit of the unified soul and spirit.[64] This tree, often shown growing next to the "resurrected" hermaphrodite, metaphorically suggests that the cosmic union produces "fruit" in the waking physical reality. The image of the transformed psyche as

bearing fruit resonates with teachings from both the Buddha and Jesus on the nature of the fruit produced by those who realize the Self.

Rooted in the earth and reaching into the highest heaven, the tree also serves an image of the *axis mundi* that links the material and spiritual spheres.[65] Metaphorically, dreams, for Jung, provide the "light" and "water" of the spirit required for the growth of such a sun-and-moon tree within the dreamer's waking life, feeding transformative change. I imagine Jung as lucid dreamer would see Lucid Surrender as fueling such growth exponentially, because the dreamer may feel aware of his or her psyche as the *axis mundi*, a tree bearing fruit of the sun and moon and of the spirit. This awareness brings new life, or fruit, into waking physical reality. An example of this alchemical materialization of spirit is evoked in my own dream, titled "The Colors of Life":

The Colors of Life

[I] go to bed early. Very weary. Woken up in the early morning and feel the spirit strongly. Pray deep prayers. . . . I find myself in a "dream" semi-lucid where my prayers continue. The room looks pinkish lavender and a woman, who seems very tired, sleeps on her side facing away from me on my left. . . . I "fall asleep" in the dream.

Immediately, [I] feel myself become lucid, with my being on the black light and winds carried at an immense velocity on a directly horizontal line out of my "heart." The journey feels long and a sacred song helps me to keep my focus. Eventually, the movement ceases and I feel my being deposited in the middle of a vast, seemingly limitless plain of black light. Then, a red light near my "feet" catches my "eye" and as I look down, I notice that the expanse appears covered with large rings of red in which concentric rings of blue and green emerge. As I look on, a purple hue softly rings the outer red circles.

It feels hard to communicate the depth of the colors, their breath-taking purity and the intense quality of life that they hold. At once, I realize these square mosaics of red, blue, and green rings fill this plain like a squaring-of-the-circle field with infinite reach. I "stand" in one of the black interstices between these tiles of living color and experience them as worlds. In the other interstices, tall pillars of laser-white light form out of "nothing" and seem alive with a radiant intelligence and beauty. They make a deep impression on me before they disappear and reappear again.

The beauty and power of the scene fills me with awe and a desire to kneel, although my dreambody seems invisible. Kneeling down next to one of the mosaics, I follow a sudden, unusual urge to plunge my "hands" into it. As I do, I feel surprised as my fingers, hands, and arms, take on a visible form, filling with a substance that has the quality of light, air, water, and earth in waking physical reality. As soon as my fingers break the surface, I feel my being and now dreambody pulled through the rings of light and back into the original dream.

The woman now lies next to me awake. Full of wonder, I begin to tell her of the dream. . . . A man joins us and kneels on the bed. He seems quite interested in the dream and wants me to get up and go with him to tell others about it.

Returning to Jung, let us imagine that his Lucid Surrender experience now draws to a close as, in the middle of his own theophany, he begins to wonder if he can get back to waking physical reality. With this thought, Jung, as often happens when the mind begins to dominate in lucidity, would feel himself lose his more heart-centered position. Immediately, as if in response to this loss, he feels his being seized by the black winds and carried in reverse through the theophanic form, the tunnel, and the black expanse at a tremendous velocity. Eventually, the speed slows, and he tumbles back into the original dream that sparked lucidity—in this case, that of the yogi, where he finds himself lying prostrate on a green yoga mat.

Here, Jung could decide (as I have myself when coming out a Lucid Surrender dream) that after such an experience he needs to rest and reflect on what has just happened. Stretched out on the mat, perhaps Jung would feel convinced that, as he had suspected, dreams truly reveal the "secret of consciousness." He could know experientially that while our dreams may contain aspects of personal psychology, they can also reveal the latent potential not only in our individual nature but also in the nature of consciousness itself.[66] By moving ever more deeply into lucidity through ever-deepening surrender to the Highest Will, we can more directly know the mystery of the Transpersonal dimension—the *nouema* behind the phenomena of existence. Because of this, lucid dreaming may open us to healing, inner guidance, knowledge, and psychic connections while reinforcing the characteristics of a wider personality rather than the willfulness and ego inflation that Jung so feared. In fact, as Jung might realize from his own Lucid Surrender experience, the objective cognition—"the secret" he sought in dreams and life—also can become known by bringing to lucid dreaming the central attitude outlined in his own psychological approach: surrender. With this thought, Jung wakes up.

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9

Clinical Applications of Lucid Dreaming Therapy

Isaac Y. Taitz

> "I had a most rare vision, . . . a dream, past the wit of man to say what it was . . . Man is but an ass if he go about to expound upon this dream . . . me thought I was . . . there is no man can tell what."
> —*Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare

The question of the purpose of dreaming has split the field. Some researchers find dreaming to be, though personally meaningful, a functionless series of random neural firings that survived only due to its lack of maladaptive consequences.[1] Other researchers argue that dreaming serves a reactive or proactive, defensive function. The latter explanations guide a theory of functional dreaming that integrates life experiences to improve psychological health. Hartmann's contemporary theory of the function of dreaming contends that dreaming allows for emotional concerns to be associated with new material in a safe space, thereby integrating traumas and promoting psychological well-being.[2]

Sigmund Freud also investigated the form and function of dreaming in his research. As he was initially a clinician, Freud applied his work on dreaming to clinical issues of the time. When seeing clients, he utilized the dream as a "royal road to the unconscious," an interviewing tool to discern the underlying processes necessary to work with to come to a resolution. Although he brought clients close to the dreaming state through hypnosis and stream of consciousness, Freud's work and psychology might have developed differently if he had used dreaming as a tool for clients to actively realize therapeutic goals in the comfort of their own home, bed, and self-constructed world.[3] If he had suggested that Anna O. open her eyes in her dream and describe what she saw in her father's bedroom, perhaps she might have reported the fear to which she blinded herself, the trauma she repressed, or even the responses her father or other dream characters would give to

prescribed questions.[4]

Lucid dreaming is being a merry wanderer of the night. It is being aware that one is dreaming while within a dream, with the ability to change any aspect of the dream[5] or do nothing and consciously watch the dream unfold. There exists some debate over whether lucidity encompasses control, or whether control dreams are separate from lucid dreams; however, for the sake of this chapter, we will default to the more general definition. The makeup of lucid dreaming therapy (LDT) changes slightly with every study, from interpersonal psychoeducation sessions to online modules, to even an extension of an existing manual.[6] LDT essentially aims to train the client to become lucid and eventually control the dream from within or at least experience it with the comfort of knowing that the individual will wake up from it.

Fifty percent of the adult population has experienced a lucid dream at least once in their life and about 20 percent experience lucid dreams regularly.[7] In addition to its natural occurrence, this skill can be learned.[8] An extensive review of induction techniques revealed that many have modest effects, with the most successful involving intention, suggestion after a period of wakefulness, and reflection/reality testing.[9] Intention setting is the pre-sleep technique of intensely imagining oneself becoming aware in a dream. This technique is also known as mnemonic induction of lucid dreaming (MILD).[10] Introducing a period of wakefulness to MILD has proved to be helpful as well. This wake-back-to-bed (WBTB) technique involves participants scheduling an alarm to wake themselves an hour before their natural wake time, and upon wakening, focusing on entering the upcoming dream or reentering the previous dream.[11] Although the WBTB technique is effective in heightening lucidity, it disrupts the sleep cycle and, therefore, may be less appealing. Reflection or reality testing is the act of continuously asking oneself, "Am I dreaming?" while awake, so as to continue to do so while dreaming and become lucid.[12] Reality tests involve examining one's surroundings for incongruities: unstable or changing small text and time or unchanging light levels despite flipped switches.[13]

In my own dreams, I have noticed that mirrors can be another potential reality check:

I looked at my reflection in the mirror . . . and saw no reflection of [my]self in my eyes. I was in

a dream! I was lucid! I pushed the windows and they collapsed with an un-glasslike thud.[14]

If our dreaming self is the "little man" that we see reflected in our waking eyes, perhaps future research can test the validity of this "homunculus mirror effect" and its efficacy as a reality check.[15] In addition, future research should replicate and apply Stumbrys et al.'s induction study, which revealed that lucid dreaming can be significantly induced through transcranial direct current stimulation of the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex.[16]

Natural and (self) trained lucid dreamers already instinctively use lucid dreaming for recovery as well as recreation (because it *is* fun!). In a 2012 study, Shadlich and Erlacher asked members of a German lucid dreaming forum about their personal uses of lucid dreaming.[17] The majority of respondents (81.4 percent) used lucid dreaming to have fun: laugh, dance, fly, and have sex. Interestingly enough, flying came up about twice as much as having sex did (whether this was due to the novelty of the experience or desire to do so is a question for a future study). These nighttime adventurers also consciously faced danger in their dreams, as 63.8 percent of them used lucid dreaming to turn their nightmares around—a strategy that persisted throughout the age groups. I always fall back on an expert lucid dreaming friend's childhood ex-recurring nightmare: after being chased by a Tyrannosaurus rex in multiple dreams, she finally got fed up and turned around to ask it what it wanted. "Hi" was its reply, as it waved its tiny claw and stomped away forever. Some participants in Shadlich and Erlacher's study (29.9 percent) utilized their lucid dreams to solve problems from waking life: work-related, academic, or even social conflicts. Apparently, females tended to use their lucid dreams more for problem solving and nightmare changes than did males, but that could be due to the higher frequency of nightmares among the female population.[18] Some of the respondents (27.6 percent) produced new and creative ideas and insights. Composing musical pieces, painting murals, or even designing structures are all possible, as the dream allowed the individuals to engage with a built-in virtual reality simulator. Finally, 27.6 percent of respondents practiced skills in their lucid dreams. Some would rehearse musical pieces while others would practice martial arts forms. Fill-in-the-blank sections on Shadlich and Erlacher's questionnaire revealed that these lucid dreamers also used their skills for self-help/healing (e.g., dealing with psychological issues or spiritual growth), experimenting with the dream (e.g., toying with the dream world or

the dream body), or meeting particular dream figures (e.g., deceased persons or dream guides). At one point, I tried to summon Morpheus, the main character/the Lord of Dreams from Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* graphic novel series, but could only catch a glimpse of his face before getting distracted by "having fun" with another character. But beyond fun and fantasy, lucid dreaming can be used for healing and growth.

In this chapter, we will go over the very clinical applications of lucid dreaming that these oneironauts (dream explorers) discovered naturally—nightmare reduction, depression, and rehabilitation—in addition to identifying directions for future applications and research.

Present and Prospective/Future Clinical Applications

Nightmare Reduction: Dream Warriors

Everyone's personal definition of nightmares is different—the generic naked-in-front-of-a-crowd dream may be terrifying for some, yet exhilarating for others (Figure 9.1). For the sake of this chapter, we'll use the definition of nightmares from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, fourth edition, text revision (DSM-IV-TR), "extremely frightening dreams that lead to awakening," even though various emotions have been reported in nightmares beyond strictly fear.[19] Nightmares are fairly common, affecting 2 to 5 percent of the general population.[20] These nocturnal specters can haunt us by disrupting our sleep cycle, inflicting daytime distress, and irritating any sleeping partners we may have nearby us.[21] Nightmares can strike at any age as a symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and bring with them the curse of higher psychopathology scores.[22]

AH! WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU!?
OH. HEY. DON'T MIND ME. I'M JUST A BAKU PASSIN' THROUGH! I EAT NIGHTMARES AND YOU ARE CURRENTLY HAVING ONE. YOU'RE ASLEEP RIGHT NOW.
OH UH...THIS AH...THIS ISN'T A NIGHTMARE.
YOU'RE IN A DIAPER. A GIANT WOMAN HAS YOU BENT OVER HER KNEE AND SHE IS SPANKING THE SHIT OUT OF YOU.
...IT'S NOT A NIGHTMARE.
WWW.HAPPLETEA.COM
COPYRIGHT 2013 SCOTT MAYNARD

Figure 9.1.
Definitions of, and criteria for, nightmares vary. In a practical sense, such a definition also relies on a subjective call of the dreamer. Image: "Nightmares," Scott Maynard, 2013, webcomic at happletea.com.

One of the functional theories of dreaming, Milton Kramer's selective mood regulatory theory of dreaming states that successful dreams present and then resolve an emotional issue, which results in a positive affect and reduced dream recall; unsuccessful dreams, in contrast, must be repeated to address the unresolved issue and leave the dreamer with a negative affect (i.e., recurring nightmares).[23] Furthermore, nightmares may serve an evolutionary purpose as a threat simulator.[24] In conjunction with these approaches, psychologists have been attempting to enlist the dreamer and together utilize the dream as a way to facilitate the resolution of nightmares with an eye toward the post traumatic experience.

Currently, the most thoroughly tested and successful treatment for nightmare reduction is imagery rehearsal therapy (IRT), an approach in which individuals recall the nightmare, decide on a new ending, and mentally rehearse the new dream during the day.[25] As nightmares may trigger lucid dreams, lucidity could be the next step of the IRT approach.[26] LDT would theoretically still have individuals mentally rehearse the process of changing the nightmare to a pleasant dream. However, they would imagine themselves becoming lucid and enacting the changes themselves, then actually enter and combat the nightmare in the manner they have rehearsed. Case studies have

shown the effectiveness of lucid dreaming interventions for the reduction of nightmares.[27] Perhaps by actively introducing bizarre or nightmare-incompatible qualities to the nightmare as well as getting direct biofeedback from its change, lucid dreamers can master their fears and regain control over their lives.

In their 2006 pilot study, Victor Spoormaker and Jan van den Bout compared the nightmare frequencies of participants on a waiting list to those invited in for group or individual LDT sessions. In both group and individual sessions, participants would describe their nightmares and desired alternative endings, learn about the prevalence and associated features of nightmare, and receive homework. The take-home assignments instructed participants to link features common in their nightmares to a reality test: "Is this really happening or am I dreaming?" Participants were also instructed to set an intention before bed that the next time they recognized the common nightmare feature or otherwise found themselves in a frightening dream-situation, they would become lucid. Finally, participants were asked to choose an ending that they liked from the LDT session and to lucidly navigate their nightmare to that conclusion.[28]

The pilot study was a success. Participants in both the individual and group sessions experienced significantly fewer nightmares after the intervention ($p = 0.002$ and 0.017, respectively), although only the individual group was significantly different than the waiting list ($p < 0.05$).[29] Interestingly, a minority of those who reduced their nightmares did not report a lucid dream, which mirrors similar results from previous research and prompts the question of whether lucidity or mastery is what reduces nightmares. Determining whether this result was due to poor lucid dream recall or the lack of a lucid dream will require further research and greater technology (to be discussed later in this chapter).

To improve upon their pilot study's success as well as to increase the statistical power, the researchers recruited more participants to go through six-week-long interventions. Except for the waiting list group, each comparison group's nightmare reduction booklets included various additions to IRT. In addition to the altered nightmare rehearsal, IRT+ participants were instructed to practice healthy sleep hygiene practices, such as by improving bedroom conditions (e.g., darkness, softness, silence), going to bed only when sleepy, using the bed and bedroom for sleep (and other "s"-words)

only, keeping a regular wake time, avoiding naps, and getting out of the bed and bedroom when unable to fall asleep. On top of all that, the third and final group was instructed practice a form of LDT—in this case, imagining themselves becoming aware that the nightmare is just a dream and determining how they would change it from within.

After analyzing the nightmare diaries and questionnaire, the researchers found that LDT and IRT+ were similarly effective when compared to IRT, but only IRT had a significantly greater effect than was observed in the waiting list control group. Unfortunately, about 70 percent of participants from each group dropped out, leaving a lot of missing data; however, the researchers utilized an intention-to-treat multilevel regression analysis as a means to compare the success levels of each intervention even given the missing data. Nonetheless, this study's results are promising but preliminary, due to the small number of participants and the larger number who dropped out of the study. The researchers blame their pilot study: as the first nightmare treatment in the Netherlands, it may have enrolled more-motivated participants. Furthermore, the researchers instructed participants in only intention setting and imagination as lucid induction methods, never teaching or having participants rehearse reality testing; perhaps double-checking small text and time will be a more effective means of biofeedback than just self-inquiry. Finally, the treatments themselves consisted of only two 2-hour sessions over six weeks, unlike the general weekly individual or group therapy session. With future replications and variations of this study, we will undoubtedly hone our ability to understand and reduce nightmares and other nocturnal nuisances, perhaps for a wider segment of the population.

Fighting Future Nightmares

As stated earlier, nightmares affect individuals of all age groups, with or without trauma, and the next step for LDT will be to address those groups. As children develop higher-order cognitive functioning, their dreams include combined memories that demonstrate an increasingly realistic quality. Their dreams may include fewer animal characters and more emotional content, and less of a victim role and more of an interactive role.[30] The topics of nightmares shift away from animals and imaginary creatures and toward personal harm or kidnapping.[31] Developmentally, the rate of nightmares decreases from 31.8 percent in 4- to 6-year-olds to 5 percent in 10- to 12-

year-olds. Almost 70 percent of all children report that their nightmares arose from an information pathway (i.e., TV) as compared to a mere 15 percent from conditioning (i.e., negative memories). Children have higher rapid eye movement (REM) activity and dream recall than their older counterparts; as a consequence, they may become more entrenched in dreams to lucidly work with them, although this skill might prove easier to master after the frontal cortex develops further during adolescence.[32]

Nonetheless, both children and adults could do with some relief from post-traumatic nightmares. Traumatic nightmares are an intrusive symptom (Criteria B) of PTSD even "without recognizable content" for children.[33]Trauma frequently removes the dreamlike structures of narrative coherence (attempting to tell a story), emotional intensity (pleasant atmosphere), and bizarreness (unfamiliar, highly symbolic, or fantasy-like and metaphoric characters or scenes) from the dreams of the traumatized.[34] The bizarre dreams that remain contain scenes with unpleasant, anxious, or fearful atmospheres of hostility, destruction, and death. Disrupted sleep in PTSD may inhibit the memory-processing function of REM sleep, thereby developing and maintaining the disorder.[35] In addition to the harmful effects of reduced sleep on daytime functioning, dreams that reexpose the individual to the trauma have been known to inhibit the recovery process. Individuals with PTSD have reported trauma-related thoughts while lying in bed, fear of falling asleep, and difficulty returning to sleep after waking from a bad dream.[36] Such negative appraisals of intrusive symptoms cause increased distress, leading to behavioral and cognitive avoidance strategies, and ultimately maintaining PTSD.[37]

LDT may combine the cognitive approach of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) with the REM-like nature of eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR); both therapies to expose and integrate the traumatic nightmare in traumatized adults and disaster-exposed children.[38] Although they did not target PTSD nightmares, Spoormaker et al.'s pilot study assessed self-reported PTSD symptoms and saw no significant decrease in such symptoms.[39] Future research should start with case studies utilizing trauma-targeted therapies in concert with a lucid dreaming component to assess the recovery from PTSD for children and adults alike.

Not to cast doubt on the resilience of the older population, but an area of concern with such therapy would be retraumatization of those individuals

with heart problems. For example, my grandfather has told and retold me about the nightmares (waking and sleeping) of his time in the concentration camps during the Holocaust. When I asked my grandfather if he would consider fighting the Nazis in his nightmares, he would always fall back on the avoidant strategy: "All you could do was run away and hide and hope you would survive." Although I felt that lucid dreaming could help him, I held back from actively suggesting it, as I did not want to exacerbate an already terrifying nightmare, in case engaging in the nightmare proved even more frightening. Then again, there is also the language barrier and familial relationship that would hinder a therapeutic application of LDT. To offer relief to all generations suffering from PTSD nightmares and perhaps even bolster minds against future traumas (e.g., terrorism), it is imperative that LDT be perfected and tested.[40]

Depression

> *I made plans with a friend to go have dinner and see a movie, but he suggests I go ahead and he'll meet me there. I go to a restaurant and the friend calls to tell me I'm at the wrong place. I feel depressed. I'm in a drive-through with some girls and the server asks how I'd like to pay for my wrong food—debit. She asks how I'm doing and I depressed-ly answer, "Okay . . . ." She mumbles something semi-caring like, "Sounds like someone's got a case of the Mondays." (May 2, 2012)*

Depression affects individuals of all ages.[41] Although some individuals may lash out in anger and frustration, most depressive symptoms paint a picture of withdrawn individuals: unmoved by their earlier passions, unable to bring themselves to be social or enjoy social activities, and many times plagued with insomniatic vigilance if they cannot escape into the sweet silence of sleep. The prevalence of depression disorders in undergraduates and graduates is estimated at 15.6 percent and 13 percent, respectively[42]—a rate that has doubled since 1989, according to the spring 2000 National College Health Assessment Survey.[43] Depression in college students has been associated with their academic achievement and a personality trait known as locus of control (LOC).[44]

LOC is a measure of how much individuals feel they are in control of their life. Individuals with an external LOC feel that an outside force (e.g., fate, chance, powerful others) is in control, whereas those with an internal LOC feel that their actions directly affect their environment.[45] Nevertheless,

empirical evidence suggests that an individual's LOC is not set in stone. For example, by observing their control over their own relaxation (via finger temperature and blood pressure) in a biofeedback technique called autogenic relaxation, adolescent alcoholics have shown significant success in internalizing their LOC.[46] In addition, internalizing LOC is possible through technology-free methods like meditation[47] (you do not need to download the app for that). As research shows a positive link between internalized LOC and lucid dreaming, this biological biofeedback system in tandem with its virtual reality component could prove to be an applicable approach to internalizing LOC.[48] In addition to LOC, lucid dreaming has been associated with better overall mental health (with depression as a subcategory).[49] Given this connection, one study set out to test whether lucid dreaming could reduce or alleviate depression by internalizing LOC.[50]

This study tested whether (1) lucid dreaming could be effectively taught via online intervention and (2) lucid dreaming could relieve depression as mediated by LOC. Over a five-week period, 194 undergraduates inexperienced in lucid dreaming completed surveys with (lucid) dream frequency and recall scales, Rotter's LOC scale, and the latest Beck Depression Index (BDI-II). Members of the experimental group were directed to keep dream diaries throughout the study, while members of the control group were to simply proceed with their natural sleeping patterns. Two weeks after the preliminary survey, the experimental group was given a lucid dreaming intervention, instructing them to rehearse reality checks and look out for reactions (e.g., double-check small text for incongruities, light switches for realistic brightness change, or fingers for malleability) throughout the day and to set an intention to have a lucid dream before bed so as to attain lucidity at night. After five total weeks of online surveys, the data were analyzed. Both hypotheses were tested using the general linear mixed model, although the first hypothesis required the use of fixed and random effects to account for the repeated measures over time.

The results of this study sent its intrepid researcher on an emotional roller coaster. Unfortunately, the intervention used did not significantly improve the lucid dreaming frequency of the experimental group; therefore the first hypothesis—that lucid dreaming could be effectively taught online—was not supported. In addition, testing for the second hypothesis revealed no relationship between locus of control and lucid dreaming, which invalidated

any mediation model. The linear relationship between LOC and depression supported previous findings, which show that LOC, when moving from internal to external, predicts greater depression.[51] A novel finding was that depression was positively correlated with lucid dreaming frequency (see Figure 9.2). These findings completely depart from the previous literature—specifically, the work by Doll, Gittler, and Holzinger, who state that lucid dreaming is beneficial for mental health (depression included):[52] "Rather, it seems as though lucid dreaming and depression symptoms are very curious bedfellows, as the results suggest that individuals with greater depression have more lucid dreams."

These results not only contradict past research findings that lucid dreamers have greater overall measures of mental health, but also prompt a new question: does lucid dreaming cause depression or does depression cause lucid dreaming?[53] Research contests the supposition that lucid dreaming does not detract from the natural process of sleep.[54] Also, no students mentioned in the present study's qualitative assessments that they spent too much time going back to sleep and trying to catch lucid dreams (tempting depression via the hypersomnia symptoms), or that they missed class, got poor grades, or had other unintended poor outcomes (though even lucid dreaming should be done in moderation). Since this intervention did not cause lucidity, it did not cause depression (which settled the researcher's ethical conscience). However, a linear correlation was present; further research is necessary to determine the relationship of causality between lucid dreaming and depression.

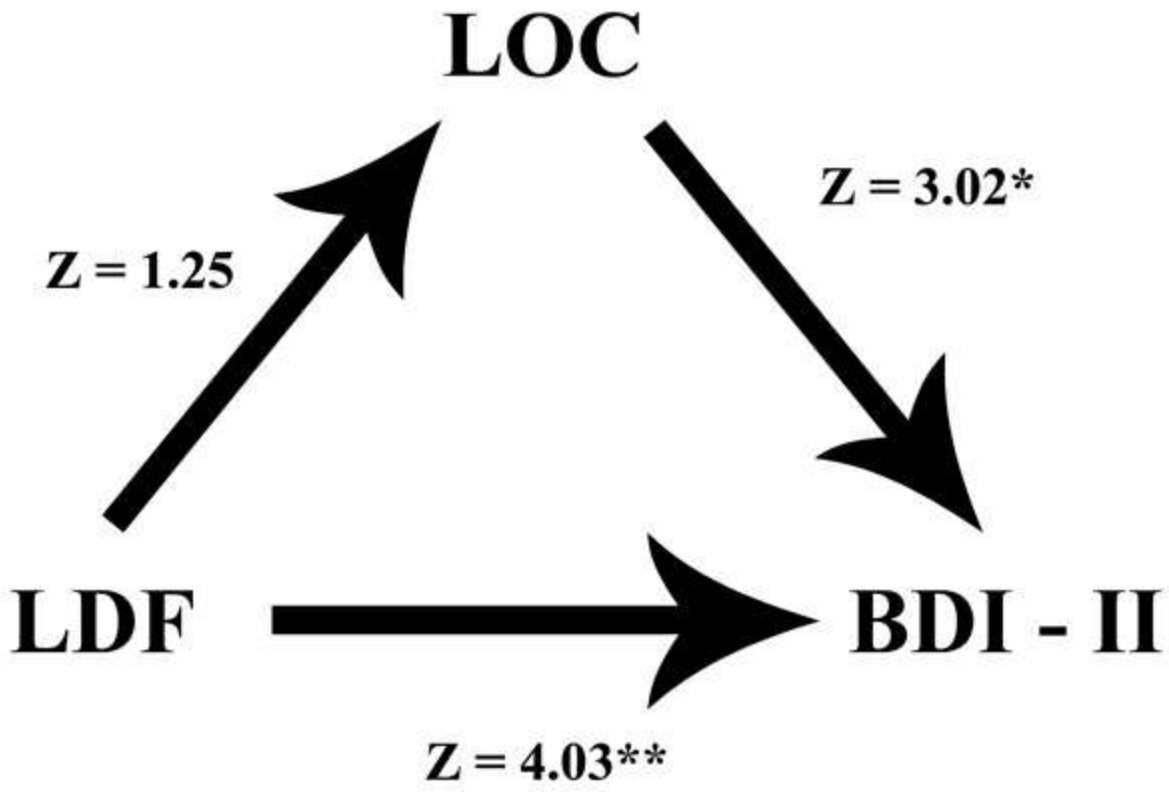

Figure 9.2.
Mediation model. Unstandardized regression coefficients for relationship between lucid dreaming and depression as mediated by locus of control. *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.001$.

These unexpected results can be explained in two ways: dream exposure and functional depression. Sleep disturbances (insomnia and hypersomnia) are one of the diagnostic criteria for major depressive disorder, which could lead to more lucid dreams. As patients with insomnia have more nocturnal awakenings, they also have more opportunities to remember their lucid dreams.[55] Additionally, those with hypersomnia may enjoy greater dream recall frequency associated with longer sleep times and later awakenings.[56] Another possible explanation is that lucid dreaming is the next step in an evolutionary adaptation to stress. The theory of functional depression[57] argues that depression serves an evolutionary purpose by stimulating self-reflection about stressful stimuli as a means toward resolution. The very symptoms of (general/mild) depression work together to limit the individual from getting distracted (anhedonia/social isolation) and help the person focus on the problem (rumination), sometimes all night long (insomnia). Lucid dreaming could, therefore, be an additional step to continue the problem-

solving process during sleep, during which individuals can consciously interact with their inner world, interview their dream characters, practice solutions, find insight, and resolve the issues that drained them so much while waking.

Defeating Depression Down the Road

Future clinical research may benefit from analyzing the application of lucid dreaming to similar topics, such as postpartum depression (PPD) and bereavement.

Dreaming activity normally increases for the mother during pregnancy and includes understandably more dreams about babies.[58] Apparently, pregnant women with more dream activity during their third trimester experience quicker and more painless deliveries than those mothers who do not.[59] Across cultures, the majority of pregnant women have anxious dreams around this time.[60] In fact, expectant mothers who have fewer anxious dreams have a higher likelihood of developing PPD.[61] Perhaps those predisposed to PPD tend to repress anxious dreams or otherwise do not do the "emotional work" to prepare them for the stressor of pregnancy. In other words, by avoiding the delivery room and associated feelings in their dreams, they may set themselves up for greater pain later on. Future studies should test whether interventions utilizing lucid dreaming can help expectant mothers simulate the delivery room and deal with their internal conflicts necessary to kick their motherhood off with a quick delivery and a PPD-free start.

At the other end of the life cycle, lucid dreaming can assist in the grieving process. Complicated grief, when bereavement lasts longer than usual, affects some percentage of the population, both children and adults, and can often include dreams of the deceased.[62] These bereavement dreams seem to appear in three phases: (1) numbness or shock (alive again, dying again dreams); (2) disorganization when emotions surface (saying goodbye, telephone calls, and disapproval dreams); and finally (3) reorganization and adjustment to changed environment (young and well again, approval, advice or comfort, and the rare deadly invitation dreams). These dreams may represent a progression through the grieving process, with the final positive visitation being the most memorable and helpful according to the bereaved. Future

studies should consider exploring how lucid dreaming might help alleviate complicated grief by facilitating the (successful/easy) progression through these phases. However, culture should be taken into consideration for individuals who expect their loved ones to be reincarnated rather than to persist in their remembered form.[63]

From the cradle to the grave and beyond, lucid dreaming holds promise as a potential therapeutic tool to facilitate the easy transition from depression into resilience.

erformance Enhancement: Going for the Gold

> *So in mid trick, I stretched out the skateboard into a snowboard and when I landed, I was in a snowy mountainside! . . . The path turned to a relatively narrow two-lane snowboarding raceway boardered [sic] by plastic netting . . . It was a competition! So I pushed and pushed and sped up and sped up. I had passed a few racers when the path became bumpy, time for a jump! There was a big dip and slope and I shot off it into the air, I flipped backwards and decided to slow down time. So while in some awesome helicopter imitation, I could appreciate how the scenery looked, really fresh and powdery, it felt refreshingly crisp but not altogether cold. I could see the other racers looking at me . . . seemingly impatient for me to let the race continue. The slow-mo wavered a bit as I noticed this, but I held on to it for a little bit longer as I observed the plastic netting-wall of the course slowly brushing against my snowboard. Then I let time resume and I quickly spun very fast and stuck the landing (felt awesome). I sped past the other racers and made it to the finish line!*[64]

After a long night of action-packed dreaming, you may wake up and feel like your heart is racing, feel as if you were literally carrying out the actions in the dream. This correlation comes from the shared neural network of dream behavior and waking behavior. Early studies by Jeannerod revealed that imagined (or covert) behavior uses the same neuronal paths as enacted (or overt) behavior—the only difference is actually carrying the behavior out.[65] The implications extended to dreams as well, but only much later did research illustrate that not only do the similar neuronal paths become activated during waking, but similar bodily reactions also occur. Lucid dreaming research has begun to combine with sports psychology to reveal the rehearsal, rehabilitative, and recreational applications of this natural virtual training/play ground.

Many athletes are familiar with the informed coach's or trainer's recounting of the power of mental rehearsal—how a group of students who imagined shooting free throws scored just as well as those who spent the

same amount of time practicing the shot with actual basketballs.[66] They may have scoffed or shrugged this pep talk off as an excuse for limited playtime or funds. How could they possibly get better on an imagined activity they could do in their sleep? If you have read this far, you can see the connection coming a mile away, or at least from half court. Research from sports science is providing more support that lucid dreaming can be used for rehearsing motor activities with positive outcomes for later performance. Multiple anecdotal reports from amateur and professional athletes have revealed the use and success of practicing such sports as long-distance running, tennis, skating, alpine skiing, equestrian, martial arts, springboard diving, sprinting, and snowboarding.[67] Paul Tholey, a pioneer in lucid dreaming research, was initially a German sports psychologist who used lucid dreaming to improve his own abilities as well as those of research participants in a qualitative study.[68] In a more quantifiable approach, Daniel Erlacher revealed that participants who lucid dreamed of tossing a 10-euro coin in a cup were able to do so much better in the morning on this task than when tested on the same task the night before. Granted, the approach for this study could not rule out the confounding effects of motivation or even waking rehearsal, so future research should strive to replicate the study. Although some have raised the concern that so much lucid exercise or dreaming in general may interrupt the natural processes of nonlucid sleep, research has found no adverse effects to date. Lucid dreaming holds great promise as a complement to any sports regimen and potentially physical rehabilitation.

Lucid dreaming may eventually serve as an aid to substance abuse rehabilitation. Although the use of most drugs of abuse tends to decrease REM sleep, the withdrawal of some agents may result in either REM rebound (more vivid dreams) or severe insomnia.[69] Dreams of drug seeking or use are hypothesized to be associated with the same neural mechanism as drug craving, the attention to which may facilitate recovery. Similar drug-related dreams are present for dual-diagnosis substance abusers.[70] Therapists are cautioned to look out for clients who perceive dreams as a consequence-free space to "use without using," which may be indicative of an upcoming relapse.[71] However, dreams of refusing drugs have been significantly correlated to diminished relapse rate.[72] Just as lucidity may come easily to those with insomnia or even the extremely bizarre dreams of hypersomnia or REM rebound, so (dual-diagnosis) clients in recovery from substance abuse

also might be extremely receptive to learning lucid dreaming.

Just as some natural lucid dreamers just want to have fun, researchers have gone out of their way to spoil it all by analyzing and quantifying the body's reaction to lucid dreaming. For example, one study of lucid dreamers conducting squats in their dreams showed significantly increased heart rate relative to strictly lucidly counting.[73] Although you would not be able to fit in the same dream workout in the same amount of time, as physical activity in a dream was found to take 44 percent more time than the same activity in waking life, future research should look into the potential benefit of a lucid workout to start your day (before you even wake up or finish your night, depending on how you look at things).

In another particularly exhilarating pilot study, lucid dreamers showed significantly heightened autonomic responses (e.g., skin conduction, respiration rate, vaginal electromyography [EMG], and vaginal pulse amplitude) to lucid sexual activity and orgasms.[74] This result shows considerable promise for the treatment of sexual dysfunction/dysregulation and a-orgasmia, particularly due to the naturally heightened genital arousal during REM sleep. In many cases, a sleep test is run for clients who have such suspect issues; if they show the natural arousal during REM sleep but not during waking sexual stimulation, the diagnosis is more likely. Therefore, when combined with waking psychotherapy, this safe, sleeping simulation may prove a helpful segue to resolving psychosexual blocks, rehearsing desired or uncertain approaches, or otherwise making wet dreams come true. Of course, future research will be necessary to adequately bring lucid dreaming therapy and sexual therapy together between the sheets.

Conclusion: Waking up Just as It's Getting Good

From flexing one's dream muscles, to figuring out (inter)personal solutions, to fighting one's nightmares, lucid dreaming has many therapeutic applications. Many natural lucid dreamers already utilize this private virtual reality simulator without prompting or suggestion. Nevertheless, from their explorations and the research that has arisen, therapists may be able to utilize lucid dreaming therapy as a clinical tool to better improve overall quality of life. Already, promising research has illustrated the nightmare-reducing

effects of a lucid dreaming intervention, the correlation between lucidity and depression, and the improvement in waking performance following lucid dreaming.

The field has much room to grow, of course. To become the therapy we envision it to be, LDT must address its limitations of definition, induction, and visibility. Researchers have yet to reach a full consensus regarding the definition of lucid dreaming—that is, whether it is strictly awareness or whether it includes control. Once the definition of this integral component is solidified, we then can do the same for a comprehensive LDT manual, utilizing the best, research-supported induction method.

In addition, only recalled dreams can currently be studied, leaving out all of the dreams forgotten or edited by the Freudian superego upon waking. Future research may be able to utilize technology capable of translating neural activity into visual and auditory data so as to replay the dream in its entirety. This seeming science fiction is not so far from scientific fact. Recently, Thomas Naselaris et al. have exhibited functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) modeling techniques to encode and decode neural sensory stimulation of participants.[75] In other words, we can currently record the participants' brain activity at least while they are watching video clips and gather a partial reproduction of the image. The researchers also attest that "any sensory or cognitive representation can be studied using either encoding or decoding methods."[76] Although getting individuals to fall asleep in an fMRI unit can be difficult, the process has been replicated; by comparing objective neural measurement of specific visual cortex activation with the same activity in sleep, we can decode the subjective dream experience.[77] In short, we are on the cutting edge of moving from radar to observing a full visual recording of a dream, and it is only a matter of time before the audio kicks in, albeit perhaps more so for the cognitions and emotions.

Whether lucid dreaming is a higher-order function adapted to help us naturally recover from psychological damage or an enjoyable vestigial structure that has not been selected against, we have found an interesting skill that has proved helpful in a number of ways. Future research may go beyond the presented research and potential elaborations to address additional psychopathologies. Since lucid dreamers can consciously interact with dream characters, lucid dreaming could be used as a rehearsal ground for social interactions (be it with anxiety-producing roommates or bearded, cigar-

smoking patriarchs).[78] Just as awareness of being in the nightmare reduces its impact, so the same lucidity may fend off the terror of sleep paralysis (or alien abductions[79]). Furthermore, with professional therapy and guidance, lucid dreaming may help individuals with severe psychopathology such as schizophrenia rein in their hallucinations and delusions instead of acting upon them.[80]

No matter which way you use it, whether for recovery or recreation, lucid dreaming is a fascinating gift that individuals from all walks of life can share, and most lucid dreamers are happy to share their experiences. Multiple communities exist online and offline for interested parties to connect with and train. Despite the popularity of *Inception*, no such groups have been confirmed in the dream world—though a dream character once led me to the "land of lucid dreamers," only to find that they were all dream characters, too.

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10

Learning the Depths of Lucid Dreaming

Robert Waggoner

> "What nature leaves imperfect, the art perfects," says an alchemical dictum.
>
> —Carl Jung[1]

The scientific validation of lucid dreaming represents one of the most underappreciated advances for psychological research since Freud's publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1899. While Freud employed hypnosis to gain theoretical insight into the energetic nature of the unconscious as well as its role as the basis of the psyche, lucid dreaming offers researchers a revolutionary psychological tool to experiment consciously with the psyche, the nature of dreaming, and the paradox of the apparently conscious "unconscious" mind.[2]

Although lucid dreaming's vast potential awaits greater comprehension and acceptance in the field of psychology, many experienced lucid dreamers have moved forward to take advantage of its practical possibilities, such as the following:

- Healing of emotional issues (going beyond recurring nightmares to include waking phobias, anxiety, and other disorders)[3]
- Directing healing intent on physical ailments for rapid physical healing[4]
- Improving physical skills through lucid practice[5]
- Performing spiritual practices while lucid dreaming[6]
- Directly accessing unconscious creativity for art, music, literature, problem solving, and science[7]

Some experienced lucid dreamers go further and maintain that the potential of lucid dreaming includes communicating with another layer of inner awareness.[8] These lucid dreamers report using a counterintuitive

technique of ignoring the dream figures and objects, and lucidly addressing questions or requests to a nonvisible awareness behind the dream (similar to the concept of *surrendering*, suggested by Stephen LaBerge[9]).

The fascinating responses and interactions with this inner awareness appear to meet the characteristics outlined by Freud's contemporary Carl G. Jung as necessary to show that a "subject, a sort of ego" exists within the "unconscious."[10] Jung viewed the potential ability to show "a second psychic system co-existing with consciousness . . . of absolutely revolutionary significance in that it could radically alter our view of the world."[11] Approached thoughtfully, lucid dreaming appears to allow lucid dreamers to engage this second psychic system, or inner layer of awareness. If true, this discovery could radically alter the future of psychology and science.

A number of ancient spiritual traditions also support lucid dreaming's potential for enhancing personal growth and insight into the nature of reality. For example, the 11th-century Indian Buddhist yogi, Naropa, deemed *dream yoga*, which includes lucid dreaming as a significant practice, to be one of the six paths to enlightenment.[12] From the perspective of dream yoga, lucid dreaming enables one to ascertain the mentally constructed nature of experience and develop powerful new insights into the nature of the self-construct. When it is sufficiently grasped, the practitioner can use these insights to avoid attachment to the dreamlike after-death *bardo* hallucinations so as to realize the clear light of non-dual awareness.

Although fascinating in its potential and implications, the actual development of lucid dreaming skills requires a considerable process of learning, assimilation, and conceptual adaptation. In my book *Lucid Dreaming: Gateway to the Inner Self*, I identified five stages of progressive development that typical Western lucid dreamers may encounter, based on my work since 1999 as co-editor of the quarterly online magazine, *Lucid Dreaming Experience* (formerly known as *The Lucid Dream Exchange*), as well as my 30-plus years as an active lucid dreamer who has experienced more than 1,000 lucid dreams.

When lecturing about lucid dreaming, I normally begin by offering two definitions. The first comes from the *APA Dictionary of Psychology* (2007): "a dream in which the sleeper is aware that he or she is dreaming and may be able to influence the progress of the dream narrative." The second definition simply defines a lucid dream as realizing within a dream that you perceive a

dream.

With these definitions in mind, I often ask the audience, how many people have had a lucid dream? Normally 60 to 80 percent of the audience will raise their hands (similar to research surveys on lucid dreaming in college age populations).[13] Then I might ask, how many have had more than 50 lucid dreams? Only about 25 percent raise their hands. How about 100 lucid dreams? Now, perhaps only 1 to 2 percent raise their hands. This impromptu poll helps the audience to identify the more frequent lucid dreamers and illustrates the varying levels of quantitative experience.

Like a pyramid with a giant base, the population that can claim at least one lucid dream seems quite broad. However, with each incremental increase in the number of lucid dreams, the population decreases. By the time the count reaches 200 lucid dreams, the pyramid comes much closer to narrowing to its apex. While this numeric analysis fails to address the qualitative impact of each individual's lucid dreaming, it does make the point that relatively few people experience high numbers of lucid dreams and indicates the additional opportunities that this achievement provides for understanding and experimenting within this special state of consciousness.

Given that many people characterize lucid dream experiences as enjoyable, profound, and transformative, why do we not see more experienced lucid dreamers? In my book *Lucid Dreaming*, I proposed four stumbling blocks.

Four Stumbling Blocks to Mastery of Lucid Dreaming

A Long Process of Discovery

Like learning how to play a musical instrument or paint with oils, the mastery of lucid dreaming takes practice, skills, and focused intent. While one may become an articulate amateur of the technical skills in a year or more, the sense of mastering lucid dreaming on a conceptual level may take decades and include serious personal work on limiting beliefs, unprocessed fears, and hidden assumptions.

Temptations, Fears, and Defenses

Lucid dreaming allows one to explore an infinite number of personal adventures. Some lucid dreamers succumb to habitual pleasures (e.g., flying, dream sex), which they return to again and again. Their personal fixations severely inhibit further progress or growth. Others may begin to explore lucid dreaming, but then retreat in fear and defensiveness when they encounter energetic dream figures, complex situations, or unexpected events. When one is consciously aware in a dream, such events can feel quite powerful and perplexing, and can result in self-restricted exploring.

Assumptions

All of us possess assumptions about the nature of dreaming, dream figures, the subconscious, and reality, such as "Dreams have no meaning," "Dreams occur from the random firing of neurons," or "All dream figures represent some aspect of myself." We often accept these personal, cultural, and scientific assumptions and view them as tacitly true. Lucid dreaming, however, creates situations that can challenge such simplistic assumptions. For many, this results in some degree of cognitive dissonance, which may impede future exploration.

Consider the following example. A lucid dreamer reports telling a dream figure, "This is a lucid dream. I am dreaming you!"

The dream figure responds, "How do you know I am not dreaming you?" Here, the lucid dreamer has a very basic and perhaps naïve assumption challenged.

The lucid dreamer considers the matter and responds, "Well look, I can fly!" and then hears the dream figure respond, "Well look, I can fly, too!"[14] At this moment, most lucid dreamers would realize a severe challenge to their tacit assumption about dreaming by encountering a dream figure that acts equally adept and aware as the dreamer. Such events are reminiscent of Jung's revelation in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*: "Philemon and other figures of my fantasies brought home to me the crucial insight that there are things in the psyche which I do not produce, but which produce themselves and have their own life. Philemon represented a force which was not myself."[15]

While Western culture largely supports a philosophy of lucid solipsism in

which all dream figures exist as mere mental projections of the dreamer, experienced lucid dreamers worldwide report instances of encountering dream figures who act more aware than the lucid dreamer, or who act consciously aware before the lucid dreamer becomes lucid. I recall a group of dream figures pushing me to a realization of lucid dreaming through their repetitious action of playing a song, and then laughing and clapping when I finally achieved lucidity.[16] Suddenly, I remembered that this same group of dream figures had tried this the night before.

Even the English language supports these tacit assumptions about dreaming. When the lucid dreamer says, "I am dreaming you," the language conveys an assumption that the dreamer creates the dream *in toto*. As a result, our language-based cognitive processes serve to reinforce habitual thought patterns—or, as some linguists say, language structures thought. The philosopher of phenomenology Edmund Husserl observed that such assumptions serve to blind us to the actual experience or "to the thing, itself." In lucid dreaming, we may repeatedly encounter the same perplexing situation and fail to realize the lesson, because our beliefs and assumptions, aided by our language and thinking, preclude us from even considering it.

Intent and Will

Our culture largely devalues dreaming and offers little direct reinforcement for exploring the topic. Apart from Internet forums and select groups, the intent to pursue lucid dreaming often ends up as a relatively solitary affair. To master lucid dreaming requires a deep internal motivation to persist through the ups and downs of the lucid dreaming path (e.g., periods of little lucid dreaming). Without that strong intent, one may abandon any deeper quest and settle for a few interesting experiences.

Resistance to Lucid Dreaming?

Given the extraordinary potential of lucid dreaming for emotional healing and insight into the unconscious and psychical processes, one might naively expect psychologists to embrace it. Unfortunately, misunderstandings and resistance to lucid dreaming exist, largely in response to early misconceptions

about the nature of the lucid dreaming experience and the idea of *dream control*. Simply stated, many people consider lucid dreaming as "controlling your dream."

But is this the actual experience of lucid dreamers? The next section includes common lucid dream examples that call into question the idea of lucid dream control.

Lucy Gillis, co-editor of our quarterly magazine *Lucid Dreaming Experience*, shared the following interesting lucid dream.

> I turn to the girls and say triumphantly, "This is a dream!" Patty is exasperated and says, "You mean to tell me we're all dreaming." I say, "No, I am. You are characters created by my mind." . . . Patty gets angry and interlaces her fingers with mine . . . Patty bends my fingers back. I don't pay attention to her. Instead I wonder how my fingers can hurt when I am aware that I'm dreaming.[17]

If the lucid dreamer controlled the dream, then how do we explain a dream figure who acts in direct opposition to the lucid dreamer? If the lucid dreamer truly controlled the lucid dream, then the dream figure would act in a puppet-like manner and avoid signs of fundamental independence. Lucid dream reports frequently show dream figures acting in a manner contrary to the lucid dreamer's expectation.

This next example is from one of my own dreams.

> *I become lucidly aware in an auditorium, and decide to fly through the wall, since I see it as a mental creation. I fly through the wall easily. On the other side, I now see a vast, tree-filled college campus with columned limestone buildings.*

How did this incredibly rich and detailed scene appear, if "I" control the lucid dream? I do not recall thinking, "Now on the other side of this wall, let a college scene appear with green grass, limestone buildings, sidewalks, and blue skies!" How, then, do I explain what I encounter, if I did not control the new scene's appearance?

Whether flying through a wall or walking around a corner, lucid dreamers routinely encounter a fully fleshed-out realm, which they did not premeditate into existence. How can anyone claim lucid dreamers control the dream, when these vast and detailed unexpected settings come into existence without any effort to create them consciously? Apparently, these dream environments manifest by virtue of some kind of cognitive activity outside the lucid

dreamer's direct involvement or control.

In this next example, the question emerges, if the lucid dreamer "controls" the dream, then how do we explain novel situations and creativity? In Deirdre Barrett's book *The Committee of Sleep*, she reports how an artist, Epic Dewfall, uses lucid dreaming to access creativity. Before sleep, he incubates his intent to become lucid and look at art. Upon becoming lucid, he often finds himself looking at a wall full of artwork, which he then examines. After considering the paintings, he focuses on two or three pieces to remember clearly, so that he can paint them upon waking.[18]

This lucid dreamer's search for creativity reminded me of an Iowa Public Radio show that I hosted on creativity in dreams. One caller, a novelist who had attended the renowned Writer's Workshop at the University of Iowa, claimed that when he felt stuck in his novel writing, he tried to have a lucid dream. Once lucid, he called the novel characters to him and asked them how best to resolve the novel's impasse. Their creative responses often gave him breakthrough realizations. If you would, imagine a novel character in your lucid dream saying, "We never should have killed Mary in Chapter 3. We need her at the end of the book to reveal Grandfather's unspeakable secret"—then you have some idea of the surprising creativity expressed. In lucid dreams, you have access to your inner muse.

Again, the main point involves the mistaken view of lucid dreams as controlled. If the lucid dreamer controls the dream and all its content, then nothing novel or truly surprising would appear. When read carefully and with insight, lucid dream reports clearly show that the lucid dreamer exists in a deep relationship with the larger psyche; understanding that relationship seems a primary function and value of lucid dreaming.

During one of the annual conferences for the International Association for the Study of Dreams, I developed a metaphor to help others grasp this concept: the sailor does not control the sea, nor does the lucid dreamer control the dream. This metaphor came to me as I spoke with Jungian dream workers who held very negative views about lucid dreaming, as they felt it meant controlling the dream. Once they understood that lucid dreamers direct themselves within a more conscious relationship with the psyche, its elements, and the immensity of dreaming, some changed their negative opinions.

This resistance by Jungians is ironic because, in many respects, the

Jungian technique of *active imagination* resembles the definition of a lucid dream. As defined by Robert Johnson in *Inner Work*, active imagination means "[A] dialogue that you enter into with the different parts of yourself that live in the unconscious. In some ways it is similar to dreaming, except that you are fully awake and conscious during the experience."[19] Johnson continues, "Although Jung held dreams in high regard, he considered active imagination to be an even more effective path to the unconscious."[20] Notwithstanding the undeniable similarities between lucid dreaming and active imagination, three decades of misunderstanding about the errant idea of total dream control have resulted in many psychologists basically ignoring lucid dreaming. Unfortunately, most fail to grasp its revolutionary potential as a tool to explore the psyche with greater awareness and precision.

Resistance to lucid dreaming may also arise because the concept conflicts with, or deflates, numerous perspectives on dreaming that are championed by scientists and researchers who appear resistant to changing their viewpoints. The simple existence of lucid dreaming makes many dream theory discussions somewhat errant, incomplete, or irrelevant, because it shows a much wider picture of dreaming.

Five Stages of Lucid Dreaming: A Developmental Model

Within the framework of developmental psychology, cognitive stages or physiological markers express maturation. Jean Piaget famously called small children "little philosophers," as they progressed through various stages of cognitive development. By observing their responses to novel situations over time, he noted that the children showed increasing degrees of understanding about the nature of physical reality. While stages often assign admittedly arbitrary markers to periods of development, they indicate a general process of growth and understanding.

In the realm of lucid dreaming, dreamers have a second chance as "little philosophers" as they encounter the dream realm with greater awareness. While some scientists consider dreaming to be basically random and chaotic, lucid dreamers discover the lucid dreamscape has rules and principles that

they must honor to maintain a stable environment and manipulate conditions within it, much as children discover the preexisting framework of gravity, mass, and inertia. Lucid dreaming teaches the lucid dreamer to see the dream realm as a principled state, verified by personal and consensual experience.

The movement through these proposed stages may proceed much more quickly for some, since people come to lucid dreaming at various levels of mental, emotional, and physical development. In my online workshops and from firsthand reports in the *Lucid Dreaming Experience*, I have noticed that some people who work to achieve a more stable mind (e.g., through a serious meditation practice) appear to experience more stable lucid dream environments. In other cases, people's educational framework can narrowly define the extent of their lucid dream exploration. For example, a friend taught a Freudian psychoanalyst how to lucid dream, and the person had immediate success. The following year, my friend asked about any lucid dreaming progress, whereupon the Freudian psychoanalyst told him of six or seven lucid dreams, then proclaimed, "But you know, even though they are lucid dreams, they still are about sex and aggression." Unexamined, a strongly held belief or set of assumptions may undermine any deeper exploration of lucid dreaming.

For myself, I learned how to lucid dream as a teenager in the spring of 1975, while reading the book *Journey to Ixtlan* by Carlos Castaneda.[21] This occurred six years before publication of the 1981 *Psychology Today* article on Stephen LaBerge's scientific verification of lucid dreaming via eye signaling[22] (not to mention the little publicized but earlier verification by Keith Hearne and Alan Worsley in the United Kingdom[23]), so I was exploring lucid dreaming with little outside influence besides Castaneda's works. As such, I had to learn many lucid lessons through experimentation, observation, and conceptualization. But like any explorer, I found that these challenges led to fascinating discoveries inside *psyche incognita*, the unknown psyche.

Today, with the help of the Internet, lucid dream forums, and books, lucid dreamers may touch upon various aspects of these proposed stages more quickly or out of sequence. In some cases beginners may fail to grasp certain foundational lessons and concepts, which they may find helpful for further growth and development.

Stage 1: Personal Play, Pleasure, and Pain Avoidance

Examining the lucid dream reports of beginners, I often notice them marveling at the lucid state, finding pleasure in the "realistic" sensations of touch and sight, while making comparisons and contrasts with waking reality. They often focus on little but play and the pursuit of pleasure. Often they will note a spontaneous sense of joy upon achieving lucid awareness, which sometimes accompanies them into the waking state for minutes or even hours afterward. If any troublesome figure or negatively charged area happens to manifest in the lucid dream, the beginners usually avoid or try to ignore it.

As beginners, the primary impediment involves an inability to maintain the lucid dreaming state. By learning the basic rules and principles of the lucid dream state, such as maintaining self-awareness, proper focus, and modulating emotions, they discover how to lengthen the lucid dream. For example, beginning lucid dreamers discover that a certain level of emotional intensity will normally end the dream. In fact, some become so excited at the realization of lucidity that they pop out of the dream within seconds. After a few lucid dreams like this, they assimilate the new information and see the importance in minimizing emotional extremes.

Modulating emotions seems so commonly acknowledged among lucid dreamers internationally that it merits the status of a basic rule or principle when acting in this alternate realm. In the dream narrative submissions to *Lucid Dreaming Experience*, you can read about lucid dreamers recalling this principle and making appropriate changes, such as "I realized I felt too excited about seeing my deceased boyfriend and might wake up, so I told myself to calm down." The range of emotional intensity likely varies among individuals, as some report continuing to dream lucidly through emotional situations (e.g., lucid dream sex) that would conclude the dream for others.

Another primary rule that garners near-universal agreement involves not staring fixedly at lucid dream objects for more than four or five seconds, because doing so normally causes the dream to collapse. Perhaps staring fixedly runs counter to the rapid eye movement (REM) often associated with dreaming, which leads to the sudden end of the lucid dream.

Beginners also learn that lucid awareness varies during a dream, and if unmindful, they can lose their lucidity. Like an aerialist walking a tightrope, they need to remain cognizant of dreaming while allowing themselves to engage the dream experience. If they engage the dream without mindfulness,

they run the risk of slipping back into normal dreaming, or a semi-lucid state where things feel dreamlike but the dreamer goes along with whatever happens. Whether beginners realize it or not, lucid dreaming serves to train lucid dreamers in using focus, awareness, and emotions properly to elongate the experience. They learn how to lucidly approach attractions in a more mindful fashion. While they might not clearly enunciate certain general principles, such as "Modulate the emotions," they may learn to do so, regardless.

In this first stage, lucid dreamers often hold onto primary assumptions about the nature of dreaming, even when the experience shows the faulty nature of those assumptions. However, given time, the lucid dream experience normally serves to undermine errant assumptions, and the "little philosophers" begin to assimilate new knowledge and formulate new ideas about the consciously encountered dream realm.

Stage 2: Manipulation, Movement, and Me

In Stage 2, lucid dreamers often focus on trying to manifest their desired objectives, through learning techniques regarding movement and the manipulation of objects. Through repeated lucid dreams, they can develop a sense of mastery in these techniques. This stage often shows a presumptive ignorance about dream figures and some consternation when they do not respond in the intended manner.

My own early experience with flying may help illustrate the sense of developmental growth and understanding.

> *Dreaming, I find myself at my childhood home and realize that I no longer live there. Now lucid, I recall that I wanted to fly! But suddenly it hits me: how do you fly in a lucid dream? I run a few feet and hop up—but then find myself merely hanging in the air about three feet off the ground. I consciously determine that I could breaststroke through the air to gain altitude. I move my arms as I swim through the air. After a good deal of swimming, I look down to see how much progress I have made. Seeing myself about 15 feet off the ground, I become concerned about the height. Holding that fearful focus, I suddenly plummet to the grassy lawn!*

In this early lucid dream, anyone can see that lucid dreamers do not necessarily have immediate access to incredible skills and penetrating insight. Perplexed by the idea of flight, I borrow the idea of physical movement—swimming—from the waking state and place it in the lucid state. I call this largely unnoticed lucid dreaming process *mental overlay* because it serves to

take what I believe I know and overlays it upon a new dimension of experience. Lucid dream reports at this stage regularly detail the lucid dreamer relating to a mental environment in utterly physical ways, such as swimming through the air or flapping the arms like wings.

With experience, the lucid dreamer may realize that physical exertion in the mental environment of dreaming makes little sense. Indeed, like Sir Isaac Newton, the lucid dreamer may begin to develop experiential insight into *mental physics* and realize that in lucid dreaming, gravity, or the idea of its effects, may exist only for those who directly or indirectly believe in it. Without the mental force of the belief, gravity fails to exist. A caller to my Iowa Public Radio show illustrates this nicely. In her lucid dream, she reports recalling that I said, "In lucid dreams, gravity does not exist," whereupon she immediately becomes weightless and floats to the ceiling. Unfortunately, as a newcomer to lucid dreaming, she did not know how to get down from the ceiling and apparently spent the rest of the lucid dream there. In mental physics, belief plays the role of a primary force.

As lucid dreamers begin to examine how their operational belief system and mental overlay impacts the lucid dream experience, the dynamic and self-reflective nature of lucid dreaming begins to reveal itself, along with new insights about manipulating and moving within the dream.

At this stage, lucid dreams may lengthen considerably in time, as the lucid dreamer solidifies earlier dream-state principles and sees the structural importance of beliefs and expectations. Also, the lucid dreamer may begin to experience false awakenings for the first time. In some rare cases, lucid dreamers may report bothersome dream figures, who express doubts about the lucid dreamer's abilities or knowledge, perhaps reflective of concerns about adequacy in a this new state.[24]

Stage 3: Power, Purpose, and Primacy

In Stage 3, the lucid dreamer begins to conduct purposeful experiments, often conceived in the waking state, and attempts to make significant changes to the perceived environment. Understanding the mental dynamics of lucid dreaming more completely, the lucid dreamer will now find achieving goals easier and report amazing instances of manipulating objects and moving through dream space.

The use of directed intent appears more frequently, giving the lucid dream state a magical air where anything seems possible. Examples of directed intent include things like intending for a unicorn to show itself when you open the door of the red barn, focusing on that intent, and suddenly finding a unicorn there. Or you may intend to fly through the night sky into outer space—as I did—and as you do so, unexpectedly all the stars fly together and create shining symbols like three interlocking circles or the Star of David. Most lucid dream experiments will show a sense of mastery and even a bit of ego inflation, but some will result in outcomes of complete surprise and bewilderment.

Here, the lucid dreamer actively experiences the importance and use of belief and expectation as reality-creating principles. The lucid dreamer notices that manipulating the mind and its belief, expectations, focus, intent, and will regularly changes the lucid dream experience. With this idea, the lucid dreamer may, errantly, begin to solidify the earlier sense of lucid solipsism and completely ignore dream figures or events that act independently of the lucid dreamer's authority or expectations.

Nonetheless, inexplicable and unexpected events will occur. The lucid dreamer will still feel surprised and bewildered by novel situations and the creative comments of dream figures. While the lucid dreamer will likely continue to treat dream figures as mental projections, the idea may occur that different types of dream figures exist. Some dream figures comply with requests willingly, some ignore the lucid dreamer altogether, and some seem to act like independent agents with their own knowledge, volition, and agenda. These independent agents often cause concern and anxiety with their purposeful actions, particularly to lucid dreamers who continue to believe in their personal authority and control over all parts of the dream.

Many lucid dreamers will stop at Stage 3, proclaiming that lucid dreaming exists as a mentally reflective game of expectations and mental models. Other lucid dreamers will feel a smidge of confusion that comes along with this sense of mastery. Lingering questions result: Why do inexplicable things happen in lucid dreams? If it all depends on expectations and mental models, then how do unexpected things occur? How can such vast creativity instantly express itself without my doing or control?

Stage 4: Re-reflection, Reaching out, and Wonder

In Stage 4, the experienced lucid dreamer tries to make sense of all the lucid dream lessons—even the ones with perplexing events, independent dream figures, and inexplicable happenings. It becomes impossible to ignore these features or hide behind personal or cultural assumptions. The experienced lucid dreamer enters a period of deep reflection, trying to work through significant quandaries conceptually or develop lucid dream experiments to resolve philosophical issues.

The lucid dreamer may explore ideas like physical healing or improving waking skills, since lucid dreaming seems connected to the physical dimension by virtue of inner mental actions. Yet, lucid dreaming also appears to be an unlimited alternate dimension in its own right, capable of allowing inner growth, fulfillment, and actualization. Conceptual insights, creative ideas, and overcoming primary assumptions fuel important progress at this stage of lucid dreaming.

One quandary that bothered me considerably involved the lucid dream response of asking a dream figure, "What do you represent?" I did this in the mid-1980s as part of a three-year study group with other lucid dreamers, all of whom had monthly goals to achieve in the lucid dream state. When I lucidly asked this question of a dream figure, something unexpected and extraordinary happened: a voice boomed out from above with a partial response. Because the response did not make complete sense, I asked for clarification, whereupon this voice boomed out again from above with a complete response.[25]

The next day, I started wondering, "Does some awareness exist behind the lucid dream?" To explore this idea, I began doing something counterintuitive: when lucid, I began ignoring the dream figures, objects, and setting, and instead addressed questions to this nonvisible awareness behind the dream. Incredibly, I received replies. In turn, I probed its awareness by asking to experience concepts beyond my knowing, resulting in some profound creative events that came in reply. I discovered that many experienced lucid dreamers had encountered something similar. Over time, I realized that this responsive, nonvisible awareness had all the characteristics outlined by Jung of an inner awareness. This inner awareness was interested in educating and instructing, and it even refuted requests that contained errant assumptions. Like an instructor setting up teachable moments and evaluating students, it remained largely in the background until asked to assist.

During this period, I realized that most lucid dreamers used "intent" in a limited fashion in line with their assumptions of lucid dream control. For instance, lucid dreamers might request, "When I open this garage door, let me see a red Ferrari!" Once they open the door, they may discover a red Ferrari. However, if they make the intent open-ended or unlimited by asking something like "Hey, show me something important for me to see," and do not prescribe the boundaries of the experience, then the results can be surprising. Moreover, if this request elicits a profound, mind-blowing response (beyond expectations and mental models), then who or what responds? From where do that information and creativity derive?

In my explorations, the most creative awareness seems to be the nonvisible awareness behind the dream, since questions asked of it routinely change the entire lucid dream in profound ways. While a lucid dreamer may have an interesting conversation with a dream figure or watch it do something surprising, this experience pales in comparison to seeing the entire dreamscape change in an instant. By asking open-ended questions, lucid dreamers can use their conscious awareness to explore the nonvisible awareness within the lucid dream.

For some lucid dreamers, the primary issue may involve the source of information. Does it emerge from within the brain or from a more profound version of the mind? Or might the information exist within a larger awareness —perhaps even some type of collective consciousness? In this stage, lucid dreamers often probe fundamental assumptions of Western thought and science. Often, they find themselves experimentally immersed in ideas of the new physics (e.g., probable realms, multiple dimensions) or ancient spiritual assertions (e.g., the after-death existence of consciousness, telepathy, clairvoyance, universal one-ness), as they personally seek to resolve such questions.

For example, in one dream, seeing my father descend a gold wooden ladder suddenly helped me realize that he had passed away a few years earlier. Now lucid, I ran up to greet my father but wondered: was I greeting only a symbolic image, or was this figure the after-death essence of my father?[26] I decided to ask some open-ended questions. I said, "Dad, you are from the land of the dead. When do you think mom will pass away?" He replied, "Probably in two to six years." I asked, "Of what?" I heard him mention something about a heart condition, which struck me as odd, because

my mother had never experienced heart problems. As it turned out, 23 months later my mother entered the hospital and almost died of a heart condition. A few years after that, she almost died again of a heart condition aggravated by a prescription medicine. Thus, in this example, my ability to reflect consciously on cultural assumptions (e.g., all dream figures exist as mental projections) allowed me to try to discern the state and awareness of the dream figure. Since the information proved suggestive to future waking-life scenarios, it provides some evidence for at least two possible explanations: either the after-death essence of my father provided information, or in the lucid dream state, I consciously accessed a larger knowing that came through the image of my deceased father.

In Stage 4, experienced lucid dreamers may explore their assumptions more critically and investigate many of them by reaching out for other explanations or a broader belief system. They may begin to see lucid dreaming—and dreaming and waking—as a co-created mental experience, involving the conscious and unconscious minds working together. For some, incredible experiences with light and energy may occur. Others may encounter images of sacred geometry, outside of their personal religious affiliation. They may hear, as I did more than once, a nonvisible voice say, "Trust. Nothing to fear," and see banners with the same message, hanging in the lucid sky. Lucid dreamers who explore this stage with an open mind usually develop a profound sense of wonder at its unlimited potential. They may even dare to consider, can you go beyond lucid dreaming? Does something exist behind these profound experiences? Does a source for this incredible creativity exist, and if so, then what about its reality?

Stage 5: Experiencing Awareness and Non-duality

In my case, it took about 20 years and more than 500 lucid dreams to reach this rarely discussed stage. Without realizing it, my personal goal to understand the actual nature of reality helped me bushwhack my way to an experience of non-duality, which Buddhist traditions consider the ultimate goal of the *dream yoga* practice. In fact, I did not know how to discuss this set of experiences—or inquire as to whether others had experienced something similar—until three years later, when I heard a Tibetan Buddhist lama, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, speak on his book, *The Tibetan Yogas of Dream and Sleep*.[27] Finally, I realized my experience had a conceptual

framework with a historical basis in a large tradition.

At this stage, I had come to see lucid dreaming, dreaming, and the waking experience as essentially co-created experiences of the conscious and unconscious minds working together (although the unconscious mind/inner awareness acted incredibly conscious and aware). By changing my conscious mind—my beliefs, expectations, focus, intent, and will—I could basically and fundamentally see a resultant change in any of these experienced realities. Also, while aware in a dream, I could request the unconscious mind's assistance and see a radical change in any of these experienced realities.

In turn, questions naturally arose. Does something exist behind experienced reality? What happens when you no longer attach yourself to the experience? What happens if you let go of beliefs, expectations, focus, intent, will, and even self-concepts? What constitutes the essential source of this incredible creativity? At this point, strange things happened. Sometimes upon waking in the morning, I realized that for the course of the entire night I had perceived blue light. No action, no dream figures, no plot, no me—just blue light. I even felt chagrined in the morning, wondering what to put in my dream journal: "Blue light"? Over the next weeks, I had more of these experiences, but no explanation for them. I did recall interesting experiences of an Asian man (a recurring dream figure) congratulating me on my progress and urging me to go onward.

Then in the midst of this, one night before sleep, I seemed to have a conversation with my inner self, which informed me that to go beyond the self-construct meant that I might cease to exist. I accepted this possibility and responded that I had to see what lay beyond the self and experienced reality; otherwise, I would feel stuck in an illusory game. Then I had the following perplexing lucid dream:

> *Two dream figures helped me through a very unusual space to a sanctuary where a very tall being stood, composed of blue light with a white sash and trident in the crook of its left arm, impassively observing me. Lucid, I laughed at the strangeness of this and wondered how to respond to this blue light being. Finally I decided to act like Carlos Castaneda whenever he felt stopped at an inner gate, and push through to the other side. So I ran to get past the blue light being. As I came up to it, suddenly I felt an incredibly loud explosion throughout my body and woke in bed with a sense that the sound had rearranged my cellular structure. Shortly thereafter, something utterly alien happened: a non-dual experience. Shortly thereafter, something alien happened: a non-dual experience, or an experience of self-less awareness within pure awareness.*[28] *No sense of self or identity occurred, just the brilliant, clear, creamy*

light of awareness. Pure awareness within awareness. Knowing light. At some point the non-dual experience ended and I found myself in a space with a robed figure. I asked, "Was that a lucid dream?" The figure responded, "No. To enter a lucid dream, go this way," and pointed to an empty space near him. I entered that space and suddenly found myself lucidly moving through a bluish-white tunnel of light. After a while, I knew I had to go up to enter a lucid dream, and as I did so, intense pulses of energy circled the crown of my head, as I emerged through the floor of a dream.

In the morning, I began to wonder about this new and self-less experience of aware light within awareness. I had never heard of such a thing. As someone who had avoided studying Buddhism because of the translation issues, I had no context for this experience until hearing Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's talk on *dream yoga*. Many years later, I read philosopher Thomas Metzinger's question, "How can you coherently report about a selfless state of consciousness from your own, auto-biographical memory? How could this episode ever constitute an element of your own mental life? Such reports generate a performative self-contradiction . . ."[29] Through this non-dual experience and 20 years of lucid exploration, I felt I knew how to answer these questions: the waking self construct does not experience it, but rather a portion of the self's larger awareness does, and once the whole self reintegrates, the waking self construct has access to the non-dual experience.

In many respects, Stage 5 of lucid dreaming shares characteristics with the near-death experience inasmuch as the ego self faces the process of letting go. The fundamental difference, however, involves the lucid dreamer's awareness voluntarily and without any attachment ceding the self-construct, which naturally leads to what lies behind it—luminous emptiness. In a manner of speaking, the lucid dreamer comes to a place where he sees through the created nature of the self-construct and experienced reality, then willingly withdraws his self-attachment. This allows for the collapse of experienced reality and brings self-less perception, revealing an experience of source essence.

While lucid dreaming allows us to reflect deeply on the constructed nature of waking and dreaming experience, repeated encounters with the awareness behind the dream convinced me of the essential purity of the psyche and its durable nature. Therefore the decision to allow myself to let go completely, even though my inner awareness informed me I might cease to exist, became an acceptable agreement.

Ellenberger's Cautionary Tale

While Freud used insights from hypnosis to help create his theoretical understanding of dreams, energy movement, and the psyche, the psychological historian Henri Ellenberger notes that people treated hypnosis as an amusing trick for almost three centuries before its importance to psychology emerged.[30] Audiences were captivated by seeing people mesmerized at local carnivals with their hands magnetically stuck to a tree, but they failed to see the importance of this practice for the budding field of psychology. Once practitioners like Jean-Martin Charcot showed the application of hypnosis to Freud and others, its value emerged as a psychological tool to affirm the existence of the unconscious and explore its nature.

This cautionary tale of the public's amusement with hypnosis may apply to lucid dreaming as well, if people—especially researchers—fail to grasp lucid dreaming's practical and theoretical importance to science and psychology, and instead view it as the inner analogue to virtual reality games.

Rarely does a scientific technique appear that allows science to explore and experiment within a well-defined mental state, like dreaming. Lucid dreaming allows this. Rarely, too, does an ancient technique for spiritual investigation, and some say enlightenment, garner scientific acceptance as an experimental tool to explore the psyche and even the nature of reality. Lucid dreaming provides this.

While Freud called dreaming the *via Regia* or "royal road to the unconscious," lucid dreaming allows us to take advantage of this royal road consciously and direct our investigations to understanding the conscious and unconscious minds.[31] Traveled thoughtfully using the revolutionary tool of lucid dreaming, this inner road may finally reveal the bountiful creativity, inner knowledge, and glorious complexity of the psyche and, in a Copernican manner, may demonstrate our actual relationship to it.

At that point, humankind may waken to a new world, a new dream of now.[32]

Notes

1. Carl G. Jung, "On the Nature of Dreams," *The Basic Writings of C. G. Jung*, ed. Violet Staub de Laszlo (New York: Random House, 1993), 469.
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11

A Hero's Journey

Myths and Dreams of Ecopsychological Becoming

Jorge Conesa-Sevilla

> "Dream is the personalized myth, myth the depersonalized dream; both myth and dream are symbolic in the same general way of the dynamics of the psyche."
> —Joseph Campbell, *The Hero of a Thousand Faces*

> *It is 2:30 a.m. Sleeping and waking up in the quiet of a new moon, a tranquil mind and rested body suggest lucid dreaming could be easily achieved. I close my eyes and stare into the darkness of darkness. My breathing is calm and regular—shallow. Soon, purple and green blobs replace the darkness. A gentle-warm stiffness overtakes my entire body. I have learned through the years that, when willing dream lucidity, this very moment is a threshold. Thus I seize this moment and make a declaration in my mind: "I shall be awake in a pool of water, in a forest. I want to go swimming." The very next instant, and as real as anything can be described as real, I am standing naked in a luscious, tropical forest at the edge of a green pool. I feel the tropical warm air on my body. All my senses function quite ordinarily. I smile, for joy and awe are common responses to these uncanny delights. I dive into clear and unmoving waters, and swim deep under. I can breathe underwater so I know this is a "dream." Strange and colorful fish swim past me. I try to follow them. I bump into the rocky edge of the pool and surface—I feel pain, I breathe air. I glide up to the forest floor, dripping sparkling water that seems to be itself conscious. I turn back and admire the whole pool—its lighter mossy setting on a dark verdant jungle. Time is running out. I take in my surroundings by quickly moving my gaze from feature to feature, absorbing as much detail as possible. Then, I hear distant thunder. I have learned through the years that this next moment is also a threshold. Instantaneously, I open my eyes to our cat purring. It is 3:50 a.m., local Maui time. It's time to get up and take a shower. And such has been my dreaming-waking reality since I was 14 years old.*

With practice and a bit of curiosity, while learning the mechanics of moving from threshold to threshold, all these moments have gifted me with the peculiar ability to examine the uncanny—the uncanny that is my mind. I know many others who can also "live in their dreams." The phrase *lucid dreaming* is a modern term to describe these experiences that seem to be as ancient as we are a species.

Let's suppose for a moment that we all agree that, by biological construction, evolutionary proclivities, social manipulation, and cognitive

architecture, we are narratives unfolding and affecting changes within and without. What does this mean? It means that we cannot arbitrarily segregate one set of experiences (such as lucid dreaming) in favor of another set (such as how we live our waking lives in society) without altering in significant ways the direction and the quality of our life journeys. From an "ecopsychological" perspective, it also means that we cannot, by fiat or neglect, erase the fundamental natural substrate that gives rise to all that is "human mind."

In this context, the narratives of our lives are a creative safeguard supported by additional and integral creative processes such as lucid dreaming. Each generation must rediscover and come to grips with the fact that it is responsible for both the inanities and the more rarified aesthetics that give rise to the description "a human being." Mind stuff does not go away; it keeps coming back.

Of late, I have come to accept that there is only one psychic narrative snaking its way through wake and dream realities and through our artificial and natural environments. This narrative is the mother of all stories: a *monomyth*. In a self-referential way, this myth is activated as we attempt to hold onto an authentic narrative (self-actualizing) in all states and environments. Fighting for and achieving this narrative is, by name, the "hero's journey." Not understanding at first that this narrative needs mending and holistic consistency is also part of the hero's journey. This is all very ancient stuff made into a vogue, anew, by contemporary dreamers who for the most part seem to be estranged or alienated from life: new heroes finding their way back to ancient-deep understanding without jungles, wise elders, or death ever-present.

What follows is an attempt to connect several ideas, which seem to be disconnected only because modern life has severed this ancient *existential hermeneutics*—that is, a totality of experiences easily flowing from wild nature to human nature, from handcrafted and cherished objects to the raw materials whence they came, and from mind dreaming or awake to the solicitations and teasing of a universe that seems poised for revelation.

Dream narratives, particularly the more coherent story trailers that emerge from dream lucidity, are not peripheral to the monomyth experiences—they are often its clarion call. Lives have been changed, including mine, when the more persistent and clearer promptings of new dream symbols beckoned a

change of course. Dream imagery supports this courage to change by acting out unforeseeable scenarios well ahead of a crisis to be endured and overcome.

In the pages that follow, several elements loop one onto the other like Hermes's twining snakes: lucid dreaming as an ongoing practice for elucidating the content and the direction of the psyche as well as controlling one's base impulses; the hero's journey proper, outer and inner, employing the illumination of dreams and truly natural environments to transcend mundane and conventional social experiences; the shape, form, and quality that an unfolding narrative takes given personal freedom or socially restricted path; and the psyche-grounding effects of an authentic relationship within nature (thriving and surviving the inclemency of nature in all its demonstrations and manifestations with minimal or no control).

Because I think this complex intertwining cannot take place in the absence of nature, the entirety of these ideas, when positively herded into transcendence and health, I refer to *ecopsychological becoming*.

Defining and Grounding Lucid Dreaming

There are many definitions of dream lucidity. Depending on the audience, I have needed to use a few of them to appear coherent in what I was describing. But calling it *dreaming* robs my experiences of their full experiential form—fuller often than the many inattentive, thoughtless, or careless moments of which reality when "awake" is usually composed. Calling them *lucid* does differentiate these dreams from the vague and uncontrolled reverie that most people experience while dreaming. Regardless, I think the term *lucidity* should also be applied to the full spectrum (up and down and sideways) of consciousness. It should mean: "I am fully attentive and comprehending of this moment," whatever the moment or the circumstances. For better or worse, we are stuck with this phrase "lucid dreaming" for now, referring to a resurgence of mindfulness with self-awareness during times when both are not ordinarily present, or only so in a limited and restricted range sense.

Repeated and willed dream lucidity seems to be governed by two ways of manipulating one's attention. First is highly focused preparation, as in the

moment in my initial dream that I described as the first threshold. This is the intention to do something or to produce dream content, combined with the concentration and patience to wait until the moment is right. Second, and particularly during the lucid dream, there has to be a willingness to fully participate, to take in all that this experience has to offer—to be ready for anything and everything.

About these kinds of attention, and their interplay when they lead to a fully attentive life, neuroscientist James H. Austin described, while employing the words of Spanish philosopher Jose Ortega y Gassét:

> Evolutionary neurobiologists might trace some of the basic receptive processes much further back. It was their hunting skills that enable proto-humans to survive. "The hunter is the alert man," says Ortega y Gassét. The alert hunter knows that "the solution might spring from the least foreseeable spot on the great rotundity of the horizon." So the hunter deploys his "universal attention." It makes no presumptions, "does not inscribe itself on any one point and tries to be on all points"[1]

The Hero's Journey

As asserted by Joseph Campbell, collectively and individually, our own human nature brings us back, again and again, to face the psychological "cleansing" aspects of a monomythic experience: the hero's journey. The monumental work at hand: "A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man."[2] To Campbell, this path "is the magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: *separation—initiation—return*: which are named the nuclear unit of the monomyth."[3]

The hero's journey also moves into the wilds of the psychological space, not just the world beyond the village:

> the first work of the hero is to retreat from the world scene of secondary effects to those causal zones of the psyche where the difficulties really reside, and there to clarify the difficulties, eradicate them in his own case (i.e., give battle to the nursery demons of his local culture) and break through to the undistorted, direct experience and assimilation of . . . "the archetypal images."[4]

Natural settings are equally important, and when they are in balance with human culture, they provide fertile ground for projection, struggle, and emancipation. At the center of this hermeneutical circle—a head-text writ upon oral-text writ upon rocks and leaves—is dreaming as a preamble to both natural settings and a supportive culture. Particularly in the uncanny conditions of lucid dreaming, what is real and what is imagined blend intricate and pervasive mythical narratives inside and out. An inescapable human condition, this admixture is explanation enough for the things we do so very well and the catastrophes we create.

For optimal psychological functioning, we seem to require both coherent human cultural foundations and wild nature. We certainly require more of the latter today—more than ever—as we are poised to destroy the very matrix and substrate that gives rise to the hero's journey in the first place: the natural landscape and the primordial elements.

A classic example of the hero's journey is Odysseus' monomyth, captured in *The Odyssey*, which takes place in both the fantastic and natural realms. As an ecopsychological narrative, the deepest human fears and desires are enacted within and assisted by natural forces in the guise of deities that at the same time are psychological signposts—projections and manifestations—that reflect inner conditions. Dreaming, eating, going on a quest, and nature as a backdrop or a destination are co-substantial experiences.

The Hero's Alienation in Contemporary Society

The disintegration of traditional or earth-bound societies, the replacement of these systems with the irrelevant pressures and pursuits of materialistic consumption, the wrecking pace of irrational and unsustainable production, the staunched conservatism that errs on the side of hoarding money or dispensing it within privileged social and economic circles, the discontinuity of monomythic traditions (e.g., meaningful rites of passage and relevant ceremonies that steer transformation of a human being into the embodiment of universal truths with nature at the center), the psychological and physical impairments and ailments of all types—all these events and forces are the collective experience of *anomie*.[5] Anomie is a sense of alienation felt when

the social sphere and its norms either do not make sense or cease to be relevant to fostering maturity.[6] The miasma of alienation is now calcified by an ever-expanding virtual swath of electronic devices encouraging the "consumer" to make more and more decisions, on a whim and unauthentically. These whims drift increasingly toward the narcissistic, toward the satiation of passing desires and fashionable trends. A society where narcissism prevails, by definition, ceases to be a community.

Because I am writing these words from ecopsychological and dreaming perspectives (two sides of a coin, one toss), I will refer to this complex situation as a state of *nature estrangement and/or alienation*, depending on the severity of the disconnection and the degree to which this severance makes it an insurmountable task to even contemplate the idea of a hero's quest.[7]

Today more than ever, as far as we understand prehistory and history, we do not make ourselves into fully matured men and women, but rather are held back by the ill-conventional forces to live as children and, more specifically, to respond psychopathologically as children to adversity and uncertainty.[8] It is the nature of children to consume and be protected—to "play," in the lesser sense of that word. In contrast, Joseph Campbell writes, "The hero is the man of self-achieved submission."[9] In the context of that passage, he means that a humility comes from yielding to the forces that guide and ultimately drive the monomythic narrative. Whether these forces are natural or the uncanny nature of deep dreams, affected in turn by truly natural narratives—a revolving door hermeneutics—the hero is convinced of the validity of his or her path only when the forces are confronted head on.

The functions of lucid dreaming, a quest in the outer world, and lucid dreaming as a quest share basic traits. In the modern climate of alienation, the lucid quest can be an antidote to self-centeredness, the hubris of supposing that our imperfect and oftentimes ineffectual social constructions are "what really matters," as well as an antidote to supposing that our automatic social personas, while chasing this or that diversion, are "real." Enduring one's company in the wild, or allowing natural processes to clarify what really matters in one's life, is a real alternative to the self-centeredness that surrounds itself in a co-enabling, materialistic, and disposable society, potentially redirecting us to a newfound sense of connection to an entire universe, represented in the micro-cosmos of our small blue planet.

Moreover, to submit to the unfolding narrative of the dream, the monomyth, or the dream as a monomyth, and to participate in them fully and authentically, may be a way of asserting the only "control" we ever really had in the midst of chaotic and contradictory social arrangements during times of accelerated historical transformations.

In contemporary society when we are less self-sufficient, less in tune with the real parameters of life, less able to confront the real sources of our anguish, or less able to deviate from a crushing and spirit-empty consensus, we die inside and out. Our bodies become a large billboard of our systemic apathy and lethargy. We advertise an expanding waistline at the same time that a disequilibrated ecology teeters on scarcity, supposing that we must be our old, bad habits. About our present situation, yet writing more than half a century ago, Campbell remarked, "It is only those who know neither an inner call nor an outer doctrine whose plight is truly desperate; that is to say, most of us today, in this labyrinth without and within the heart . . ."[10]

I do not believe that the hero's journey was ever a mass enterprise, from the dawn of humanity and continuing to what we call civilization today, unless whole nations were forced to march in step with the ideological machinations of a deviated "hero." Particularly today, the monomyth sounds like yet another extravagant notion, or another type of "adventure" designed, temporarily at least, to address a particular ill.

Nevertheless, from a human ecological perspective, one imagines that hunter-gatherer and horticulturalist groups were more likely to have been immersed in an almost perpetual, wrap-around monomyth where most activities had a meaningful counterpart and counterpoint to an ongoing cosmic narrative, inseparable in speech, thought, feeling, and dreams. If so, and if this epoch of human evolution—which does account for 99 percent of our time on the planet—impacted us more deeply than others and shaped our psyche in more humanly describable ways than our modern sedentary-safe situations, then it would account for the archetypical nature and insidiousness of the lure of the quest, however misinterpreted. That dreaming was central to these happenings is assumed to the extent that the bits and pieces of cultures past and present—the fragments of information we have archived about them —make it a central preoccupation for divination, animistic encounters, and real-life decisions to be undertaken. For this reason, I have described lucid dreaming as a link to the Paleolithic mind, or at least a mind less disturbed by

the synthetic and meaninglessness of modern surroundings.[11]

In the multifold, chaotic, and daily contradictory situations of contemporary society, it is up to each of us to pursue significance in the transpersonal experience without the help of a crumbling and alienated society. Again, Campbell weighs in:

> The modern hero, the modern individual who dares to heed the call and seek the mansion of that presence with whom it is our whole destiny to be atoned, cannot, indeed must not, wait for his community to cast off its slough of pride, fear rationalized avarice, and sanctified misunderstanding . . . It is not society that is to guide and save the creative hero, but precisely the reverse . . . And so everyone of us shares the supreme ordeal . . . not in the bright moments of his tribe's great victories, but in the silences of his personal despair.[12]

Some are called, others forced by circumstance, and others force the way desperately—yet only a handful ever undertake and survive the hero's journey. The "calling" remains a central and personal-intimate motif of a hero's journey today, judging by the intensity of dream reports that I still read, triggered by isolated sleep paralysis or occurring in a lucid dream. One lasting and piercing dream image made symbolic in the context of everyday toils is sometimes enough to catapult a dreamer into the preliminary personal and deep queries that mature into the journey.

The Monomyth as an Ecopsychological Journey

In the first chapter of his ambitious book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell introduces a minimalist but helpful preview of the monomyth. Figure 11.1, redrawn from this text, depicts a spelled-out version that serves as our anchor thesis: separation–initiation–return as the standard path of the mythological adventure.

Given the dire planet-wide situations that humanity faces, the following nuclear "path to adventure" is a path of redemption. If one makes the argument that most of these problems have resulted from anthropocentric and selfish views of creation, a limited scientific understanding of life cycles and systems (resistance or inability to understand the scientific process), and the all-too-rapid ascension of new societal and economic systems that are blind to the responsibility we have to other peoples and their places, and to other

creatures and their places, then this model is a call to do much better—to take responsibility. The Hawaiians refer to this duty as *pono*, or "to do what's right." This model and path is "ecopsychological" through and through if at the end of self-individuation the last and most humble creature on this planet is accounted for as essential to this integration: all totems, all of us, all worthy of a role in cosmic play; ever unfolding, together.

Insofar that culture negates nature, the natural, being-as-natural, and becoming and maturing in/with the natural, then at least some of the work of the monomyth guide and antagonist requires an understanding of why and when this negation occurred or has taken hold in the person—how it is affecting her, now. The very tools necessary to undertake the hero's journey can be assumed to be absent and must be provided for prior to entering the wild and spacious places—the couch or reclining chair of the hero being the mountains, the rivers, the cold nights, and the uncomfortable heat that often serve as the crucible for change

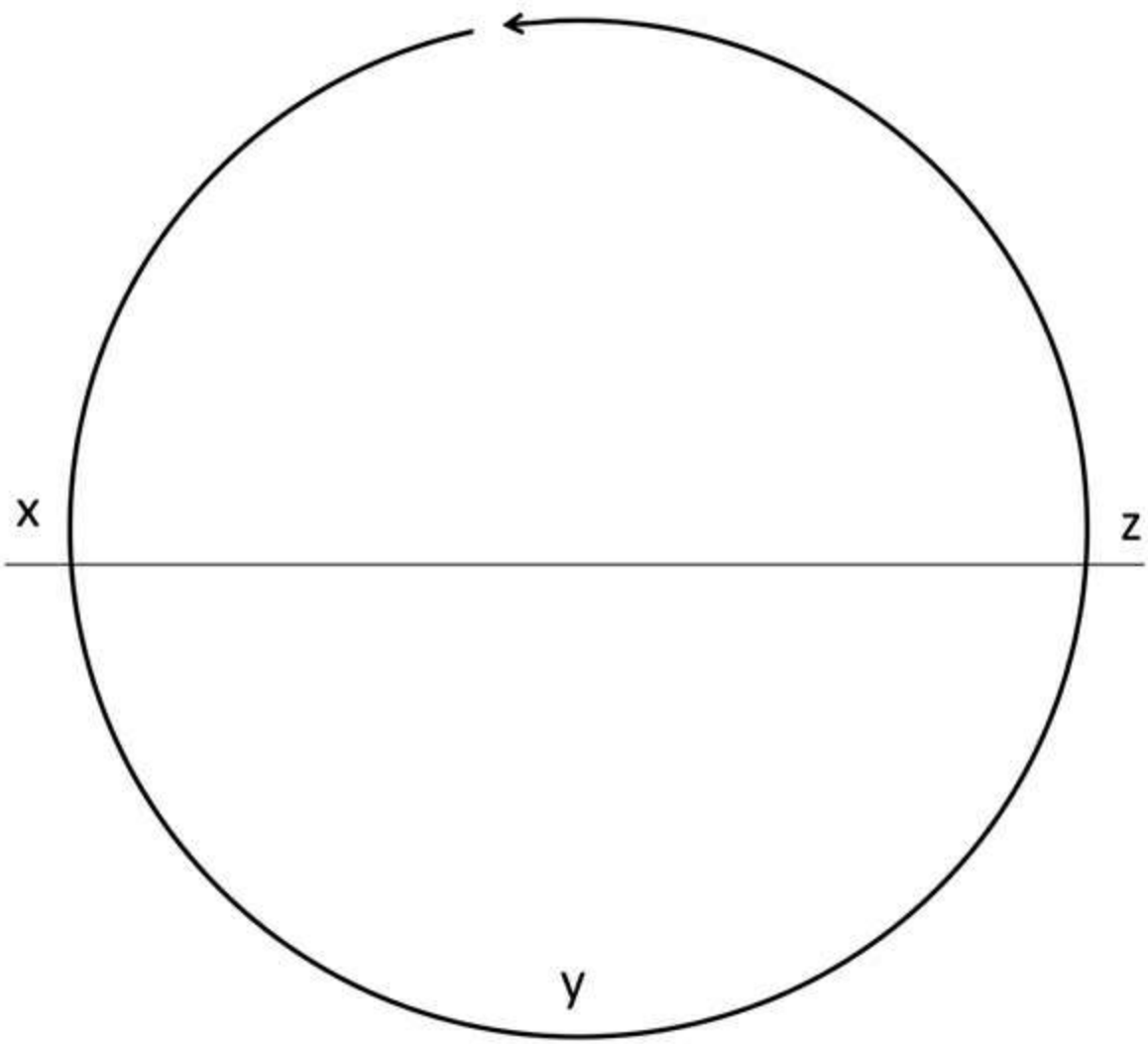

Figure 11.1.
Separation (x), initiation (y) and return (z) is the standard path of the mythological adventure, creating a threshold that separates the known from the unknown.

Furthermore, to the extent that a negation of nature is persistent propaganda sustaining the cultural milieu from which the hero originates, then the hero must anticipate how she will reenter and adjust to this conflicted realm. If we believe "the good" is to be found in nature and in communities that strive toward a harmony between the effects of human culture and healthy ecologies, then reintegration may mean a drastic change in life, including challenging loved ones—ending relationships that do not foster or support further growth—and starting new communities.

The seriousness of this "ecopsychological facilitation"—if a hero's

journey can be facilitated—cannot be underestimated, for I suspect that a large segment of health care providers might explain their work as one of "functionality in society." Namely, after "x" or "y" treatment or intervention, or when therapy has run its course, usually dictated by the timeline of an insurance company or some idiosyncratic preference of a medical provider, the client is asked to do very silly things or return to the misery and drudgery of the same-old, corrupted, neurotic social space. In other words, the onus is on the client to survive the silliness of the health care system and the toxicity of bad societies and disjointed communities.

I have been a student of, researched, and written about sleep paralysis and lucid dreaming for the last 20 years. This ongoing work, particularly the analysis of dream narratives and their correlates to everyday awake narratives, reiterates the psychological maxim that "self" is a virtual construction and part of an ongoing narrative. Surely, the self is textual, too, from a *semiotic* perspective, or the study of signs and sign processes in language as well as natural systems. Other areas in psychology, especially narrative psychology, have adopted the term "narrative" as the central descriptor of inner life and conduct. Even in the more scientific approach of cognitive psychology, the understanding of memory is commonly seen as an ongoing, editable narrative. Some of the work by A. Korzybski, J. Lacan, and J. Derrida is in keeping with the notion of a virtual self that gathers existential momentum from "places" and "text" along a narrative.[13] The narrative could be inaccurate and even corrosive, or realistic and sustainable-adaptable.

So far throughout this chapter, I have argued that monomythic experiences, being rooted in the biologically and culturally archaic proclivities of *Homo sapiens*, have an intrinsic narrative flow. Our species shares with related *Homo* groups the oldest of our wanderlust desire as a mode of surviving: journeying toward a seemingly perpetually receding horizon, with its promising abundance within reach, if only one could journey to these new resources and make the physical and psychological accommodations necessary to meet these new challenges. The happenings between the "here and now" and the "there and later" form the skeleton of a hero's adventure. The hero's journey is thus that basic and ancient. C. G. Jung recognized the antiquity of this connection so much so that he elevated "the hero" to a bona fide archetype. And, like all archetypes, according to Jung, the hero is part of our genetic heritage poised to possess the psyche under appropriate conditions.

This could mean that ecopsychological becoming is automatic. Once the self recognizes this particular and basic formula of "adventure," it moves through its narrative according to the promptings and insinuations of the phases and stages of a monomyth proper as beckoning signposts. As suggested earlier, dream narratives are the clarion call of the hero's journey. Dream symbols suggest needed action, and the courage to change is further supported by new dreams, allowing for the aversion of crisis, both personal and collective. But how does this happen?

Dreaming the Story of the Self

The dream studies described earlier also provided insights as to the nature of self during diverse conditions: dreaming, awake, depression, and oceanic moments. Still an incomplete formulation and description, it pays to sketch out the bare-bones dynamics of these transformations. In essence, dream narratives are characterized by alternating moments where the dreamer recognizes himself, is an "I," or passively observes the ongoing events, as a "me-we." A range of dreaming experiences could be characterized by how profoundly the "I" is invested in a dream (e.g., lucid dreaming) and the degree of control that self-as-an-I has over the content and narrative of a dream. Reflecting on a memorable dream, for example, oftentimes a dreamer can recollect whether the story line was robust or weak—in other words, whether the narrative was coherent or chaotic.

Another aspect of lucid dream narratives is the degree of personal insight obtained from a "story." Some narratives are rather mundane—a series of automatic schemas—while others are pregnant with meaning and useful for a growing personality. In this sense the opposite ends of the continuum could be a powerful and memorable lucid dream that occurs as part of a vision quest and the fleeting image that seemingly has no context and is quickly dismissed and forgotten.[14]

Figure 11.2 tracks the *dynamics* of "I," "me-we," and direct perception (unconscious processes—intuition, insight, or a repressed unconscious proper) as part of an unfolding narrative. This illustration suggests that a dynamic self can be seen as a product of a metamonitoring and introspective agent: the "I," that as G. H. Mead thought, is capable of stepping outside the

conventions of the artificially formulated and conditioned exigencies of society[15] Cultural norms and our adherence to these conventions when deploying our different social roles (e.g., father, wife, sister, teacher) create the "me-we" dimension. This is no formal structural analysis; I prefer to think of these as aspects, conditions, or states, rather than as personality structures. Finally, the body/perceptual system is capable, on its own, of assessing the conditions of a given narrative and contributes to this discourse.

All three conditions (I, me-we, and direct perception) seldom seem to be operating out of context, but rather are usually part of social interactions, or interactions while in nature, that abide by or propel a given narrative. The narrative itself then is both cause and effect to a state "self." When they either are not synchronized or contribute disproportionally, they can be aberrant or dysfunctional—for example, when the "I" dominates (as in depression) or the "me-we" leads (as in unquestioned compliance with societal standards —*foreclosure*). In some cases unconscious processes overrun the "I"/"me-we" system, such as during situations of reflexive self-preservation. Lastly, although it is difficult to imagine a narrative driving itself without the "I," "me-we," or unconscious mind, one can think of situations where an expected narrative—"going to the restaurant," for example—takes over this "self" system automatically and accomplishes "eating" with minimal input or contributions from the other agencies or domains. "I was out of it," one would say, or "I went along with it," as if a given narrative had the power to obscure the actions of the other agencies.

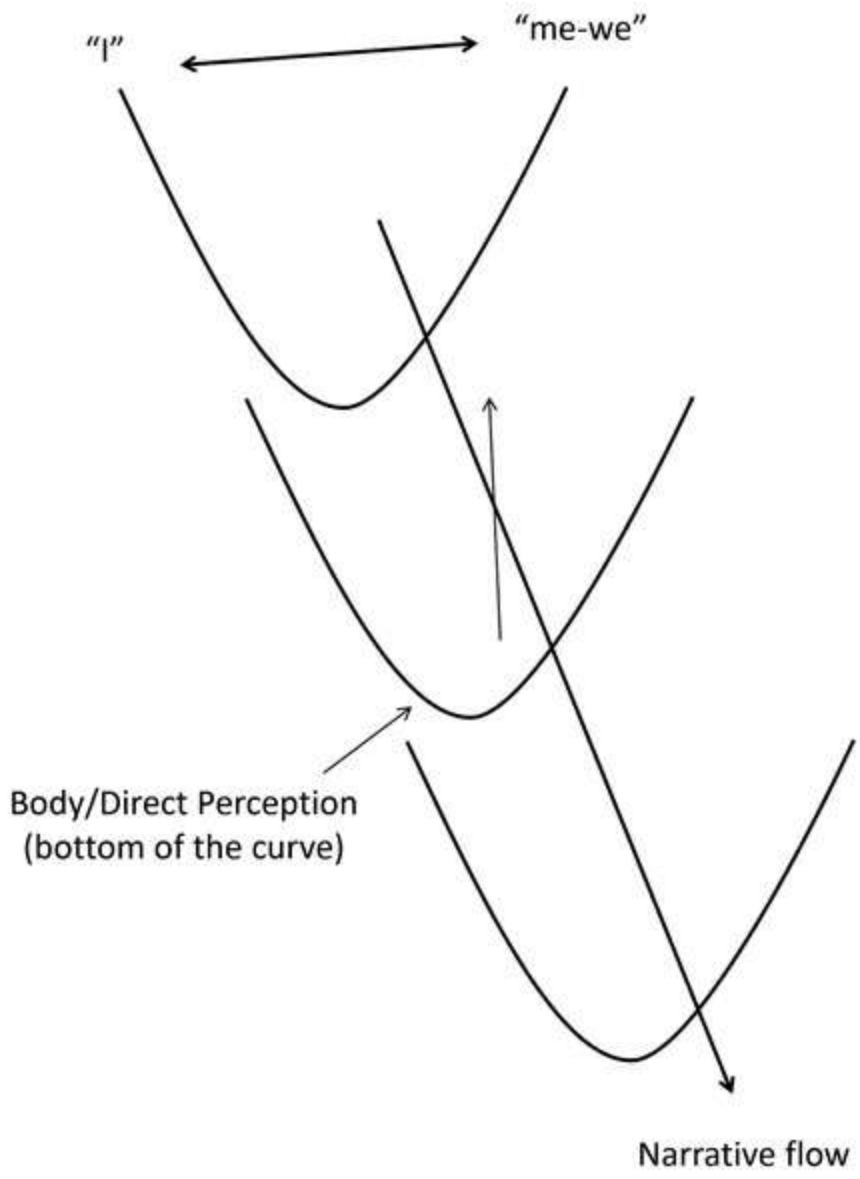

Figure 11.2.
A dynamic self creates narratives constructed from the "I," or the introspective agent, the "me-we" dimension, which includes cultural norms and our social roles, and direct perception, which includes insights and intuition.

In short, we can be, proportionally speaking, an able and semi-independent agent and judge of our destiny; a creature of convention following society's dictum, with minimal judgment; or a spontaneous and even automatic agent being prompted by unconscious forces that are unknown or even unknowable. It is in the moment-to-moment expression of all these "states," in their conjugation, that personality is defined. Creativity lies in the depth and range of manipulation across all three domains and in

the ability to reformulate an ongoing narrative.

To reiterate, while in the midst of an unfolding narrative, during any *consciousness situation*—"awake," "lucid dreaming"—the contributions of all these aspects of self dynamically interact with each other, adding meaning and fortifying its flow, and thus channeling its direction.

Assuming that a monomythic journey (and a lucid dream narrative of worth) is unfolding according to this species-specific and thus prescribed formula, where the selected and accidentally encountered elemental forces of nature shape a given narrative, it might be possible to directly observe the body language of the journeyer and assess where that individual is located in the narrative. The usefulness of the preceding description can be confirmed by new configurations of personality "states" or by the achievement of a certain goal.

The relative value and contribution of these elements would look like Figures 11.3 (before) and 11.4 (after) for an authentically and sincerely embarked-upon journey, provided significant changes occur. Figure 11.3 illustrates a relatively standard, socialized, and "conforming self" under the dominance of "me-we" processes or the conventional identifications that provide for a fairly embedded social life. This "before the journey" existence unfolds at the expense of more robust and independent ego processes (the "I's" capacity for deeper and long-term self-reflection and criticism of the social sphere), with intuitive processes dampened or not heeded at all, and strict life narratives that are predictable, prescribed, static, or even noxious.

Such "conventional narratives" could include foreclosing (yielding to social pressure) on decisions that are central and, therefore, define one's life's vocation (e.g., career choices, marital status, lifestyle, work). In contrast, a monomyth journey promises a redistribution and shift of the "conventional" existential situation such that the creative and self-reflecting "I" grows in prominence and, therefore, in its capacity for accepting the "wisdom" of unconscious processes, tapped into, reenergized, or rechanneled. The result; life narratives that are much less conventional and subject to needed scrutiny and timely modification. The conventional narrative is the foundation for banal existence, unhappiness, or neurosis; the monomyth journey, for a life worth living—adventurous and fulfilling.

This is ultimately a psychological model in that it places the responsibility of transformation, of pursuing an ecopsychological unfolding

or becoming journey, on the person's shoulders, not on society. In the context of ecopsychology, it reveals another responsibility for the viable individual who is an active rather than a conventionally passive agent. In this sense, a monomyth is "evidence-based" transformation, not a hypothetical construct. It is by the products of the life "after" that one can assess, retrospectively, whether the journey made a significant impact. The returning hero might now be capable of confronting those aspects of society that are less relevant to his progress, of becoming.

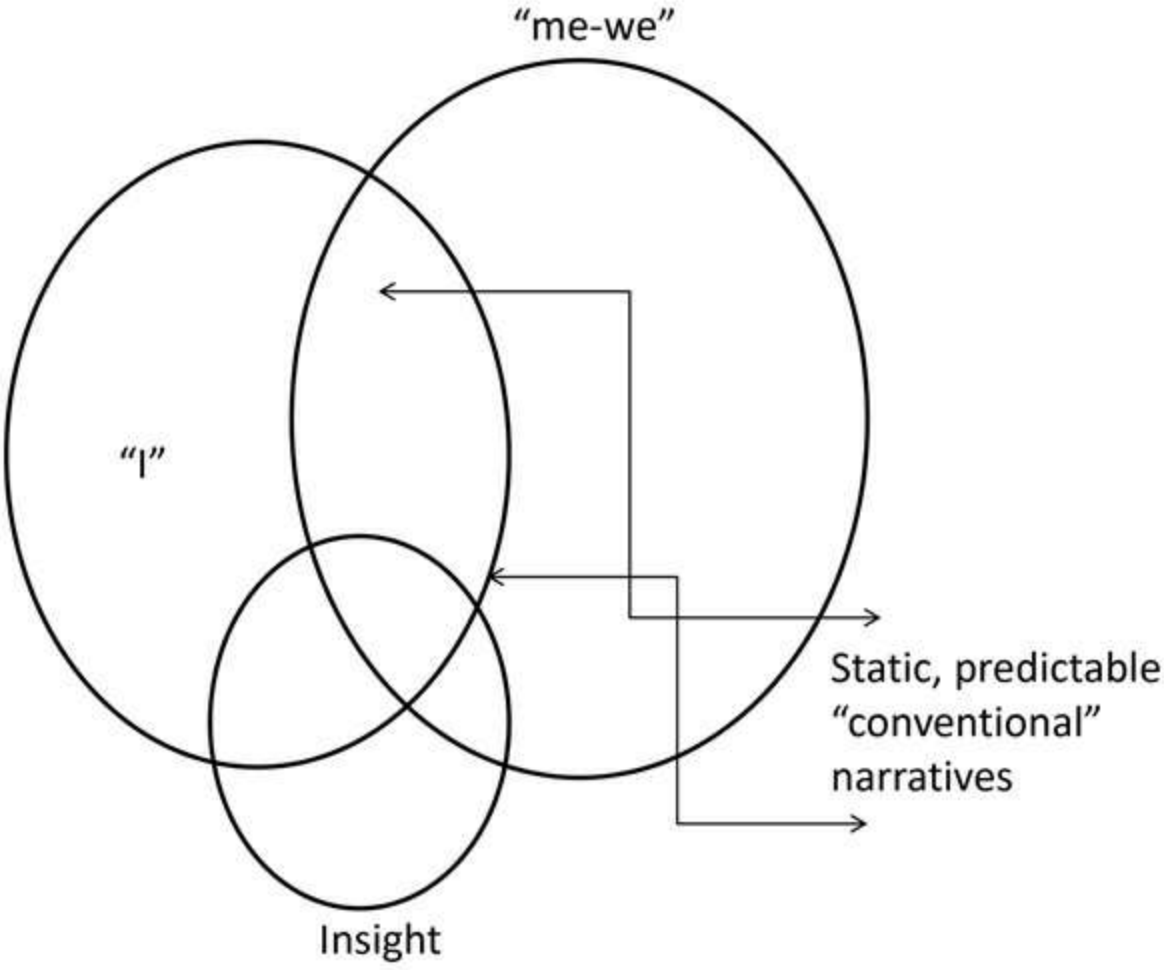

Figure 11.3.
Before the Journey: a relatively "conforming self" under the dominance of "me-we" processes that are the foundation of banal existence and neurosis.

Notice that, to the extent that we are part of social groups, the function of the "me-we" construct is never eliminated, but rather remains part of the self.

However, during authentic moments of self-examination, its adherence to social conventions is routinely questioned and critiqued—that is, it is deconstructed. This process is consistent with the role of a hero's quest in traditional societies: the community is poised to gain from the insights (the hero's boon) obtained on a journey, particularly if these insights deal with conservation and sustainability—the aesthetics of nature being reflected in the individual. This questioning might eventually produce new social groups that the journeyers believe are good for them. Once again, in the context of ecopsychology, one presupposes that sustainable communities that allow for continued reintroduction in nature—communities that are supportive and share an ecologically valid (sustainable, provable) ethos—are not conventional in the modern sense of the word. In keeping with deep ecological writings, the capacity for insight while immersed in natural spaces proves to be a source of renewal for self and community indefinitely.

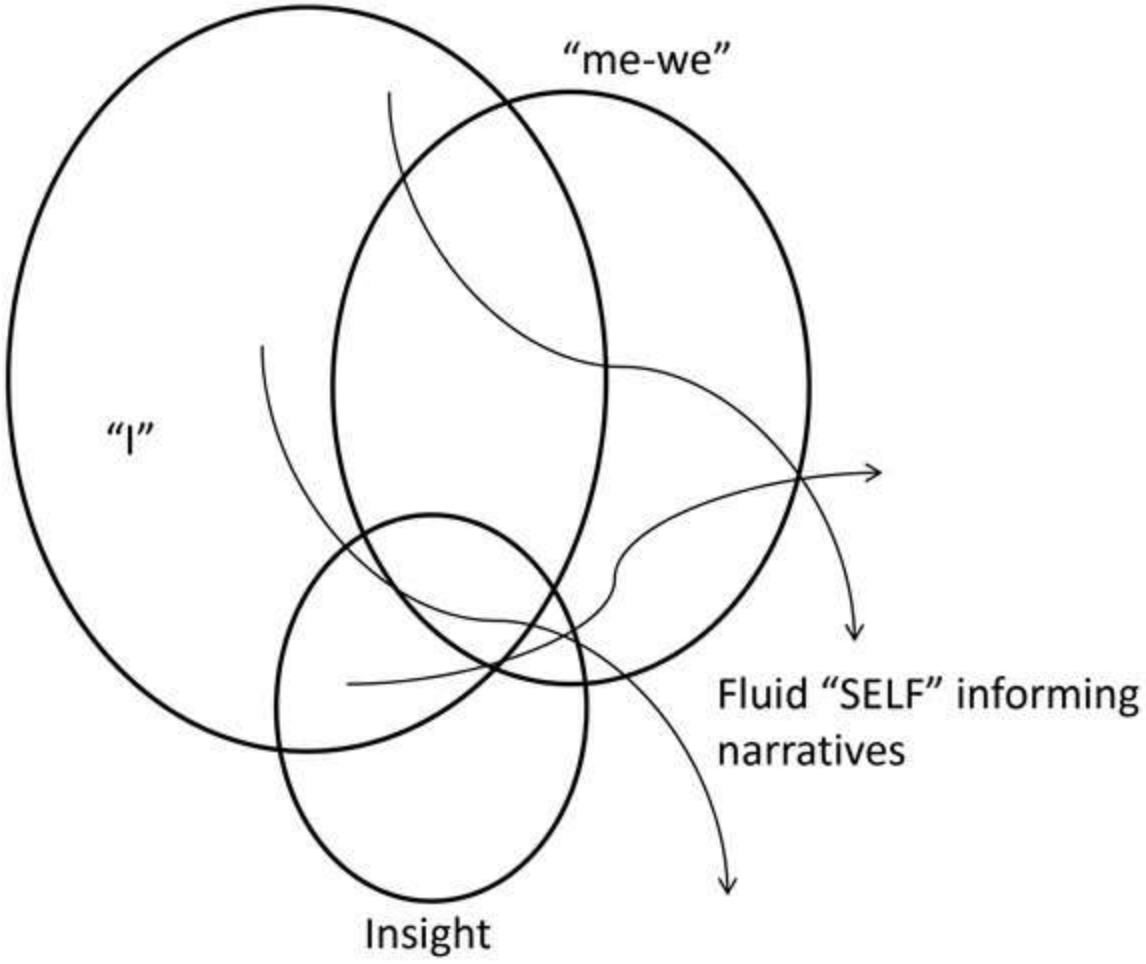

Figure 11.4.
After the Journey: The self-reflecting "I" grows in its capacity for accepting the "wisdom" of unconscious processes, creating a life worth living—adventurous and fulfilling.

Challenges after the Hero's Return

As Campbell writes, "The return and reintegration with society, which is indispensable to the continuous circulation of spiritual energy into the world, and which, from the standpoint of the community, is the justification of the long retreat, the hero himself may find the most difficult requirement of all."[16] And again, "the effect of the successful adventure of the hero is the unlocking and release again of the flow of life into the body of the world."[17]

To come back around to the central conflict today, each generation (every

social reconfiguration, with more or less scientific understanding, and with more or less technological advances) is obligated by these psychological dynamics to pursue "a narrative." Inescapable as they are, and because they are narratives "on the hoof and on the run," sooner or later they run their course, change their direction, or are violently corrected by a keel that yearns for the authentically "awesome," a wider psychological horizon, and much greater possibility—and responsibility. In these times of confinement and artificiality, attending to the mythic journey is more important than ever.

The conqueror pursues a hero's journey where he fights heathens and many-flavored antagonists to fulfill this basic need. The conquered is a hero, too—of the same cloth, facing the consequences of a new and unprecedented foe. However, only recently have we arrived at this unusual and unprecedented juncture in our human development. Depending on where we mark the ominous historical line, within the last 500 or 200 years, during which overpopulation, environmental degradation, and geopolitical influence have changed our basic understanding of what a "human being" might be, both conqueror and conquered have run out of monomythic space. The fences seem that much higher. The hero needs room to roam, even if it is only a token wilderness—sacred mountain, creek, or cavern—where a monomythic journey can be undertaken. Where this traversing is internal (lucid dreaming), it also pushes boundaries.

Confinement—whether physical, social-physical, or socio-psychological—seems to be a catalyst for mystery and discovery. The more we cover up, the more we discover. The more reactionary, secretive, and fanatic the social configurations seem to be, sooner or later the more assuredly the repercussions are with respect to the form and the intensity that unleashed creativity takes to make the necessary corrections.

As narratives go, the fairy tale has a most dissatisfying ending to any story: "and they lived happily ever after." Equally scary is an ogre-like perpetual darkness, hellish last paragraph, in its never-ending defeatism. But there is no permanent "happily ever after" or "ogre-like perpetual darkness" when it comes to ecopsychological unfolding or becoming. Because humans are natural beings—monomyth-seeking, lucid dreaming-enchanted creatures—a monomyth both hellish and beautiful ends up being a more satisfying and informative narrative. What there is—and ever was—is the possibility to forge ahead with "a story" as long as this narrative is consistent with natural parameters. When it is not, it is comfortable fantasy. When it is coherent, the

myth challenges and transforms us.

Notes

1. James H. Austin, *Zen and the Brain: Toward an Understanding of Meditation and Consciousness* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 73.
2. Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), quoted from the original, "Bollingen Foundation" (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1949), 30.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 17–18.
5. I use the term "traditional" to mean "earth-bound," or sustainable means of relating to nature within the sphere of smaller populations living in a knowable bioregion. The ideas presented in this short section have been addressed at length in other writings. Please see J. Conesa-Sevilla, *Eco-psychology as Ultimate Force Psychology: A Bio-semiotic Approach to Nature Estrangement and Nature Alienation* (Philadelphia, PA: Random House/Xlibris, 2006).
6. For more about anomie, see M. Orru, "The Ethics of Anomie: Jean Marie Guyau and Emile Durkheim," *British Journal of Sociology* 34, no. 4 (1983): 499–518.
7. Conesa-Sevilla, *Eco-psychology as Ultimate Force Psychology*.
8. Paul Shepard, *Nature and Madness* (San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books, 1982).
9. Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 16.
10. Ibid., 23–24.
11. Jorge Conesa-Sevilla, *Dreaming with Bear*, paper presented at the annual conference for the International Association for the Study of Dreams, Montreal, Canada, July 10, 2008.
12. Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 391.
13. A. Korzybski, *Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics*, 2nd ed. (Lancaster, PA: Science Press, 1941); R. Con-Davis, "Introduction: Lacan and Narration," *Modern Language Notes* 98, no. 5 (1981): 848–859; M. Sepulveda-Santos, "Memory and Narrative in Social Theory: The Contributions of Jacques Derrida and Benjamin," *Time and Society* 10, nos. 2–3 (2001): 163–189.
14. To pay due respect and acknowledgment, my own thinking has been influenced, generally speaking, by the work of S. Freud, C. G. Jung, J. Lacan, J. Derrida, G. H. Mead, and Zen Buddhism. Thus, Figure 11.2 illustrates my own synthesis of some of their ideas while trying to match the empirical evidence of experiencing "oneself" along the narrative flow in my dream data.
15. J. Conesa-Sevilla, "The Realm of Continued Emergence: The Semiotics of George Herbert Mean and Its Implications to Bio-semiotics, Semiotics Matrix Theory and Ecological Ethics," *Sign Systems Studies* 33, no. 1 (2005): 27–52.
16. Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 36.
17. Ibid., 40.

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12

A Deeper Inquiry into the Association between Lucid Dreams and Video Game Play[1]

Jayne Gackenbach

Harry T. Hunt

Previous research has indicated that video game play specifically, and more generically all electronically mediated interactions, can become a sort of meditative experience.[2] This research points to significant parallels between game play and meditation. These include improved attentional skills, deep absorption, flow experiences, improved spatial skills, and increased lucid dreaming, all of which are characteristic of both meditation and video game play.[3] The effects of gaming may not be as profound or far reaching as meditation, but the evidence suggests that gaming allows an entry into states of consciousness typically accessed by meditators.

Another perspective on this thesis is the association of meditative experience with intense or lucid dreams—that is, their mythological or, in Jung's term, archetypal content. This level of experience is strikingly resurrected in the structure of many role-playing games. David Molina discusses the relationship between archetypes and massively multiplayer online games (MMOG):

> The main theme of most role playing games takes the form of the Hero's Journey. Players take on the role of a hero/anti-hero and venture from safe grounds into unknown or dangerous territories to engage monstrous resistance and complete quests. After gaining experience and fortune, the players return to the safe lands with the new knowledge, wisdom and spoils of their adventure. MMOG environments are rich in archetypal imagery and storylines that facilitate a reenactment of the Hero's Journey, and unlike TV, cinema or literature, the user is the main character choosing his/her own path through the adventure. Joseph Campbell believes that an engagement with the hero archetype is an essential part of our existence and that "if we happen not to be heroes in the grand sense of redeeming society we have to take that journey ourselves,

spiritually, psychologically inside us."[4]

It can be argued, as did Carl Jung, that the need to engage with our internal mythologies or archetypes may be greater in modern societies, as such societies are characterized by a lost common ground.[5] In the early days of humanity, people actively lived their archetypes through shared ritual, dreams, and spirituality. In modern times, there may be a vacuum in this sense that is being addressed in part by gaming.

Another important connection between dreaming and traditional techniques of consciousness transformation is lucid dreaming, meaning the capacity to be aware that one is dreaming while the dream continues. Some role-playing games may potentially result in such dreams. In addition to its heightened metacognitive self-monitoring, to be discussed later in this chapter in the context of more specific research reviews, lucid dreaming bears a direct phenomenological and cognitive resemblance to the states sought in traditional meditation; indeed, it has been further developed as such within both Transcendental Meditation and Tibetan Buddhist practices. In both dream lucidity and meditation, there is an enhanced self-awareness whose full emergence is marked by acknowledgment of a vivid kinesthetically enhanced presence and feelings of awe, fascination, and at times bliss similar to that associated with Maslow's peak experience and Otto's descriptive phenomenology of a numinous feeling of the felt sense of the sacred. When combined with enhanced mythic-archetypal content, which is a common development with more long-term stabilized lucidity, this enhanced self-awareness gives many lucid dreams a striking similarity to accounts of shamanistic vision-trance and the "big" or sacred dreams of tribal societies.[6] Such experiences were also of interest to Jung and were crucial in confirming a directly felt sense of a shared or collective social reality.[7]

Review of Recent Research in Video Gaming and States of Consciousness

Nielson, Smith, and Tosca note that a culture's most popular games may reveal its core values. Specifically:

> Games emerge as societies mature and develop more advanced political and social organizations. Games reflect the evolution of a society: the more complex a social system, the more advanced its games. . . . For Mead, an individual can only obtain his unity of self when he has internalized this "generalized other," that is, the attitude of the whole community. Games are excellent mirrors of the way that people organize themselves, where all actions are related to each other in an organic way that can be understood by learning the rules.[8]

While make-believe play has a long history of both child and adult participation, it has become technologically embodied through the application of virtual reality technology.[9] Video game play has become so widespread that it rivals the other major entertainment industries. Video gaming is no longer regarded as only a child's toy: the average gamer is now 35 years old and increasingly people of all ages and cultural backgrounds are enjoying video game play.

Much research has been conducted to determine such gaming's negative consequences in terms of aggression,[10] the potential for addiction, and obesity.[11] Numerous positive consequences of video game play have also been found, from practice in social realms to improvements in cognitive skills.[12] The growth curve of technologies and their absorption in society are demonstrated well by Preiss and Sternberg, who point out that cultural tools, while developed at great expense, create a learning and cognitive atmosphere for future generations that is much easier to navigate and allows them to move forward.[13] A major issue in evaluating the effects of technology on the mind is the increasing ability to couple our mental representational systems with technological systems that augment input data. Examples abound: absorption in a movie or TV show, texting on a cell phone, or playing a video game. Not only are we immersed in and enjoying these augmented and virtual realities, but it is becoming increasingly obvious that technology is altering our range of mental functions.[14]

Various researches have also chronicled the effects of gaming on states of consciousness or traits associated with consciousness. These aspects of consciousness have been examined as a function of video game play: attention,[15] presence/immersion,[16] absorption,[17] and flow.[18] In fact, these four aspects can be conceptualized as interdependent.[19]

What is immediately on our mind is what is in our attention. Our attention is most often thought of as an aspect of waking face-to-face reality, but it need not be. When we are asleep in a dream, for example, the dream events

have our full attention, but we are "living" in an alternative reality created anew each night by our brain. Another alternative reality that can command our attention is virtual reality. Although not fully immersive, many, if not all, video games create a technologically built alternative reality that players feel present in, as it draws their attention to the "enemy" approaching. Thus, presence is realized when our attention is on a virtual reality and we feel as though we are "there."[20] When this happens over some period of time, the player is described as absorbed in the game. At its most absorbing, game play can induce experiences of flow or a perfect balance of challenge and skill so that the player feels an oneness with game events as they unfold. A gamer described his "Zen" moments in gaming and meditation:

> A moment of zen for me when I am playing is like being inside the game, as if I was the person who was running around, and not myself playing the game. It sort of feels like the controller is my brain and I completely use it as a part of my body rather than an extension. A zen moment in meditation for me is different than this, but different in the sense that I feel in tune to myself and the world rather than in tune with the virtual world.[21]

As can be seen from this quote, the flow experience has qualities of higher states of consciousness,[22] although it may also be a factor in video game addiction.[23]

Another state of consciousness that may be affected by video game play is dreams. The research literature on dreaming function has explained that dreams are important for information[24] and emotional processing.[25] Thus the question posed in our laboratory has been, what are the effects on the biologically constructed alternative realities of dreams from immersion in the technologically constructed worlds experienced during video game play? In this chapter, we summarize our research into the effects of game play on a specific type of dream that has direct relevance to our conceptualizations of consciousness.

Lucid Dreams and Video Game Play: Previous Research Summary

In our research program into the relationship between video game play and

dreams, we generally defined the hard core gamer as someone who meets the following criteria:

1. Plays video games on average several times a week
2. Typically plays for sessions of more than 2 hours
3. Has played 50 or more video games over their lifetime
4. Has been playing video games since grade three or earlier[26]

In more recent inquiries, we have also taken into account the preferred game genre.[27] In several studies, we were able to show that these hard-core gamers had more lucid dreams than those who rarely game.[28] This finding was almost always associated with group differences in dream control and sometimes with a preference for the third-person perspective in a dream. Generally dream recall and sex of subject were controlled.

Because in the previous studies the dream information was based upon retrospective reflections on dream history, we refined the methodology by collecting recent dream reports and looking at other forms of electronic media use from the day prior to the reported dream.[29] In a factor analysis of these morning-after dreams, including dream type, general type of media used the day before the dream, and gamer history information, both lucid and control dreaming were associated with high-end gamer history and heavier media use, especially with video game play.

Why might we expect this association between video game play and lucid dreaming? Video games are a technologically constructed alternative reality, while dream worlds are biologically constructed alternative realities. Thus one could argue that there is a kind of carryover learning effect. If you are in an artificial reality for hours each day, it follows that you might recognize something similar when you are in another artificial reality at night. Indeed, Revonsuo points out that "the dream world is thus 'virtual' for precisely the same reason as a computer-generated synthetic environment is: in both cases I feel physically present (i.e., I *am* [authors' emphasis] phenomenologically present!) in an unreal place where my physical body is not really present at all."[30] Additionally, we have examined perceived presence in dreams versus a video game. Gackenbach and Rosie compared ratings of presence after playing a video game to presence after having a dream about that video game.[31] Few differences were observed in the felt sense of being there

between dreaming and gaming. This supports the idea of the similarities in the states, virtual and dream, and thus the potential for a learning transfer of appreciation for the "reality" (or lack thereof) for each experience.

Another reason we might expect to find an association between lucidity and gaming is that video game play has been associated with improved spatial skills,[32] as has lucid dreaming.[33] Some resistance to motion sickness is needed to play these games on a frequent basis,[34] and lucid dreamers have better vestibular systems[35] and, therefore, are not susceptible to motion sickness. Finally, the high attention and absorption reported by players[36] and in research on gaming[37] are reminiscent of the same qualities associated with meditation.[38] Mediators have been found to have very high levels of lucidity in sleep.[39]

Three lines of inquiry will be examined in this chapter to further investigate this gaming-lucidity link. In all cases, the data are drawn from previous research that either was not analyzed or was not analyzed in this way. We first examine other cognitive qualities in dreams that are associated with the lucidity-gaming linkage. Next, we consider the bizarreness of dreams and its relevance to the gaming-lucidity link. Finally, lucid versus non-lucid dreams of gamers are compared using the Hall and Van de Castle method of content analysis by drawing on data from several studies.

Cognitive Structure of the Lucid Dreams of Gamers

Lucid dreaming has been characterized as showing a heightened metacognitive capacity.[40] Koriat defines metacognition as the "process by which people self-reflect on their own cognitive and memory processes (monitoring) and how they put their meta-knowledge to use in regulating their information processing and behavior (control)."[41] Kahan, building on the work of Purcell, Mullington, Moffitt, Hoffman, and Pigeau,[42] argues that lucidity in sleep might be viewed as a type of self-reflective awareness.[43] It previously had been thought that such reflective awareness in dreams, culminating in lucid dreaming at its maximum, is generally weak[44] or at best difficult to assess.[45] Both physiological and psychological studies have brought this assumption into question, however, arguing instead that

dreaming often includes controlled and rational thinking.[46]LaBerge and DeGracia point out that while nonlucid dreams can have metacognitive qualities, "meta-cognition during lucid dreams is not confined to events occurring in the dream, but references, either explicitly or implicitly, waking experience as well . . . hence, lucidity in the context of dreaming, implies meta-cognition framed by consciously accessible memories of waking experience."[47]

A more fully elaborated definition of metacognition is that suggested by Nelson and Narren, who consider three separable components: intentionality, monitoring, and regulation.[48] Early efforts to draw a conceptual line between waking and sleeping cognition did not separate these components.[49] Using Nelson and Narren's model, Kahan and LaBerge developed the Meta-cognitive, Affective, Cognitive Experience Questionnaire (MACE) to determine the cognitive components of dreams and their relationship to waking cognition.[50] This scale was administered as part of a study by Gackenbach and Kuruvilla of the dreams of individuals who vary in their history of video game play.[51]

Additional analyses were undertaken considering the MACE and self-reported lucidity, control, and third-person observer perspectives in dreams, along with history of video game play and hours played the day before the dream.[52] The question asked was, when gaming is associated with lucidity, which elements of metacognition are also evident? In a factor analysis, one factor showed an association between gaming, lucid dreams, and MACE items, while two other factors were also of interest. Specifically, high gaming, both historically and the day before the survey was completed, was associated with high lucidity, third-person observer, and dream control, as well as with three MACE items (high reports of internal commentary during the dream and thinking about one's own thoughts and feelings during the dream, but low reports of thwarted intentions).

In another study, Swanston and Gackenbach examined lucidity and control dreams as a function of gaming versus meditation/prayer, including responses to the MACE.[53] Along with the meditation/prayer group, they added a high activity versus low activity manipulation. That is, participants were asked to report a dream after a day of high activity (i.e., gaming or meditation/prayer) and after a day of low activity. Two of the three items associated with gaming and lucidity in the previously mentioned study were

also found to be associated in an interaction between group and condition in Swanston and Gackenbach's study. Specifically, while the meditating/prayer group self-reported more lucid dreams overall, the gaming group reported the most control dreams across conditions. Internal commentary item on the MACE was highest in the gamer group after a high-activity day and lowest in the meditation/prayer group after high meditation/prayer activity. The opposite was the case after a day of low activity. In addition, the gamer group was reported as having less thwarted intention in their dreams after a day of playing video games, whereas the meditation/prayer group reported more thwarted intention after a day of high meditation/prayer activities and less thwarted intention in their dreams after a low-activity day.

We can conclude that internal commentary and thwarted intention seem to be two markers of self-reflection associated with lucidity and gaming. Thus, after playing a lot of games during the day prior to sleep, gamers had more internal commentary and less thwarted intention in their subsequent dreams relative to another group whose members did lots of meditation/prayer. This combination explains the higher dream control for gamers overall. However, the lower lucidity relative to meditation/prayer among gamers (although higher than the lucidity in the control group) points to an orthogonal relationship between lucidity and control, as has been pointed out in previous research,[54] and seems to be consistent with the nightmare protection hypothesis of gaming effects on dreams.[55]

Bizarreness and the Gamer-Lucidity Link

Despite research showing most dreams to be relatively plausible simulations of daily life,[56] bizarreness in dreams continues to be investigated owing to its theoretical and intrinsic interest.[57] Hunt points out that what we now call "bizarreness" was central to traditional "dream-centered" tribal societies.[58] Different types of bizarreness have been examined, including Hunt's distinction between clouding and hallucinations[59] (including a subfactor for archetypal mythological content) and Hobson's two-step distinction between discontinuity and incongruity,[60] with the latter being elaborated upon by Revonsuo and Salmivalli in their assessment of bizarreness.[61]

Using the Hall and Van de Castle system of content analysis of gamers' dreams, Gackenbach and Kuruvilla found that gamers reported more characters of a bizarre type.[62] In more elaborate analyses of dream bizarreness, Gackenbach, Kuruvilla, and Dopko as well as Gackenbach and Dopko found a positive association between video game play and dream bizarreness.[63] However, neither group of researchers considered the type of dream (lucid or not), in its analyses. These dream type data are not available for the Gackenbach and Dopko study, but are for the Gackenbach, Kuruvilla, and Dopko investigation.

Dream type association to gaming and dream bizarreness was investigated by Gackenbach, Kuruvilla, Ferguson, Mathewson, and Darlington. They examined two data sets where these three types of information were gathered or coded.[64] Dream bizarreness was coded by judges using the method developed by Revonsuo and Salmivalli.[65]

Initially, separate factor analyses on the same variables were examined for each study. These studies were run several years apart but both on western Canadian university introductory psychology pool subjects. These two-factor analyses were basically replicated, but with gaming (factor 1) and bizarreness (factor 2) as separate factor structures. The dream type variables loaded on the remaining factors.

In each study, additional relevant information was available, so a second factor analysis for each data set was computed. In the case of the Gackenbach, Kuruvilla, and Dopko data, personal history of incidence of dream types information was available along with self-estimates of the type of dream just reported.[66] In the case of Gackenbach et al. data, information on additional gaming the day before the dream was gathered, as were additional details about dream lucidity regarding the dream just reported.[67]

Some association between gaming and dream bizarreness emerged in each additional factor analysis. For the Gackenbach, Kuruvilla, and Dopko data, younger age at which the individual began gaming was associated with higher impossible dream content.[68] No dream type mitigated this association. In the Gackenbach et al. data, age of starting gaming was also associated with a bizarreness variable—that is, self-report of the dream being bizarre but not matching any of the judges' evaluations of dream bizarreness or any dream type.[69]

In conclusion, dream type did not illuminate, as hoped, the relationship

between gaming and dream bizarreness. Additionally, these extended analyses showed few gaming/bizarreness associations. Thus, while there seems to be some association between video game play and dream bizarreness, determining the nature of this linkage requires further inquiry, and the connection may not be related to lucidity per se.

Content Analysis of Lucid and Nonlucid Dreams

Several of our studies of gamers' dreams used the Hall and Van de Castle (HVDC) content analysis system, with the coding sheets developed[70] by Schneider and Domhoff. The first such analysis was based on dreams gathered during intensive interviews with 27 hard-core gamers.[71] The second was from dreams gathered online.[72]

Comparisons were to male HVDC norms in both studies, as the majority of the gamer groups were male. Gackenbach and Kuruvilla compared the previous interview HVDC data to their online collected data and found some similarities and some differences. They observed that of the 25 subscales for which group differences could be determined, more than half (16) showed a difference between either of the two gamer groups and the norms. Half of these differences applied to both gamer groups; the other half was associated with one group or the other. Of the eight subscales that showed a difference between both gamer groups and the norms, seven were in the same direction, included more familiar and dead/imaginary characters, and featured fewer dreams with at least one instance of aggression, friendliness, sexuality, misfortune, or good fortune than the Hall and Van de Castle norms. In both cases, the dreams of the hard-core gamers included more familiar characters than the norms.

These characteristics were scored if it was directly stated or implied that the character in the dream was known (i.e., the boy next door). Gamers' tendency to score higher on these criteria than the norms might be due to their relatively restricted worlds. They are perhaps less likely to venture into unknown real worlds and, therefore, less likely than the male norms to meet strangers. While literally there are many strangers in online gaming, the familiarity of the gaming environment and characters might result in gamers' perceptions of being among familiar (and not unfamiliar) players. This

interpretation is partially supported by the significantly higher indoor settings in the dreams of the online gamers. Another character difference that was replicated across populations was higher incidence of dead and imaginary characters.

Finally, eight scales indicated the incidence of some social element occurring at least once. These included dreams with at least one incidence of aggression, friendliness, sexuality, misfortune, good fortune, success, failure, or striving. Five of the eight categories (aggression, friendliness, sexuality, misfortune, and good fortune) showed significant differences from norms for both samples. In all five cases, the direction was less strong than for the norms, but when all males who had dreams coded were compared to all male norms, the same finding emerged. This may be more of a generational finding than one specific to gamers. The same was true of all females, except for sexuality, where there was no difference from the norms.

Separating out lucid from nonlucid dreams in gamers may help to further elaborate these group differences. When combining these two data sets and a third set of unpublished HVDC analysis data and examining lucid versus nonlucid dreams of gamers, further light is shed upon the nature of the lucidity in dreams of video game players.[73] The number of lucid and nonlucid dreams gathered from each data set is identified in Table 12.1.

In two of the three studies the dreamer identified the dream as lucid, while in the third study an independent judge so identified the dream.[74] Gamers' lucid dreams were compared to their nonlucid dreams, collapsed across sex, to get larger cell sizes. The results are shown in Table 12.2. Gamers' lucid dreams featured more physical aggression, less misfortune, more friendliness, and more dead and imaginary characters compared to their nonlucid dreams.

In short, these are the differences one would expect with lucid-control dreaming, in which lucid dreams deliberately tend toward an overall much more positive dream atmosphere. The one apparent exception is the higher physical aggression in lucid dreams than in nonlucid dreams of gamers. However, given the otherwise positive dream experience, it is likely that the gamers themselves view their often consciously deliberate aggression in these lucid dreams positively, much as they do in gaming. A typical scenario is the use of aggression to fight off some onslaught—a factor that also triggers lucidity, as in this example:

Table 12.1 Number of Gamer Subjects per Study as a Function of Gender and Dream Type*

Gender	Dream	Gackenbach (2009)	Gackenbach et al. (2009)	Gackenbach and Dopko (2008)	Row Totals
Male	Lucid	5	7	6	18
Male	Nonlucid	53	46	30	129
Female	Lucid	2	2	6	10
Female	Nonlucid	21	2	40	63
Column totals		81	57	82	220

* All studies were nonspecific for nonlucid type of dreams and in all studies one dream was collected from each participant.

> Well, once Jean Grey [a Marvel Comics and video game character] got loose and started killing people, I was, like, "This is really weird, this is probably a dream," and it was like right after that she showed up and I told myself that I need to wake up. I thought that something bad was supposed to happen and I didn't want it to happen so I should wake up.[75]

Indeed the application of gaming violence to threatening dream scenarios has been further explored by Gackenbach, Ellerman, and Hall in their nightmare protection thesis regarding gaming.[76]

Conclusion

After summarizing the previous research on the association between video game play, meditative absorption, and dream lucidity, three types of considerations of lucidity and gaming were explored in this chapter: the association of lucidity in gamers with metacognition, dream bizarreness, and nonlucid dream content. In terms of specific forms of metacognition in dreams, it appears that gaming adds a dimension to the lucid dreams of gamers such that their full potential for focused problem solving is expressed, very much like with the strategies of video gaming. Some research indicated gamers' dream included an enhanced bizarreness, but lucidity was not found to mitigate that relationship. Finally, comparing the lucid and nonlucid dreams of gamers, it was concluded that lucidity in gamers' dreams emphasized the already generally positive dream experience of being lucid in

sleep, including enhanced aggression that facilitated the sense of empowerment (also typical of video game playing). Not only is there some indication of more lucidity in gamers' dreams, but that lucidity seems to be further enhanced by the gaming experience.

Table 12.2 Hall and Van de Castle Comparisons between Lucid and Nonlucid Dreams of Gamers

	Gamer Nonlucids	Gamer Lucids	*h*: Gamer Lucids vs. Gamer Nonlucids	*p*: Gamer Lucids vs. Gamer Nonlucids	*N* for Gamer Nonlucids	*N* for Gamer Lucids
Characters						
Male/female percent	48%	68%	+.41	.089	83	22
Familiarity percent	70%	64%	−.12	.511	171	39
Friends percent	42%	31%	−.22	.206	171	39
Family percent	15%	08%	−.24	.178	171	39
Dead and imaginary percent	09%	21%	+.35	* .040	187	42
Animal percent	04%	02%	−.11	.532	187	42
Social Interactions						
Aggression/friendliness percent	75%	56%	−.42	.112	69	18
Befriender percent	38%	43%	+.09	.849	13	7
Aggressor percent	46%	20%	−.56	.237	46	5
Physical aggression percent	60%	93%	+.83	** .005	60	14
Settings						
Indoor setting percent	66%	48%	−.36	.118	99	23
Familiar setting percent	68%	50%	−.38	.170	73	16
Self-Concept Percents						
Self-negativity percent	76%	62%	−.31	.310	66	13
Bodily misfortunes percent	27%	00%	−1.10	* .042	11	5
Negative emotions percent	84%	67%	−.40	.361	37	6
Dreamer-involved success percent	36%	50%	+.28	.708	22	2

Torso/anatomy percent	31%	25%	−.13	.806	39	4
Dreams with at Least One						
Aggression	30%	33%	+.08	.727	122	21
Friendliness	12%	33%	+.51	* .029	122	21
Sexuality	03%	00%	−.36	.123	122	21
Misfortune	09%	24%	+.41	.083	122	21
Good fortune	00%	00%	0	1.000	122	21
Success	07%	10%	+.11	.643	122	21
Failure	11%	05%	−.25	.288	122	21
Striving	18%	14%	−.10	.666	122	21

* indicates a significant result of $p < .05$.
** indicates a highly significant result of $p < .01$.

Broader Contextualization

Absorption, fantasy play, lucid dreaming, and dream bizarreness/metaphority are psychological constructs. However, their relation to gaming, and vice versa, calls for a more general level of analysis. To return to the placement of gaming within the social nature of consciousness that opened this chapter, we tend to miss the collective societal nature of higher states of consciousness, and absorptive states generally, owing to our status as Westerners and given our values of heightened autonomy and extreme individualism. In fact, similar states in traditional tribal societies, guided by their explicit mythological systems, are what held these societies together in the sense of Durkeim's collectivity of consciousness.[77] We proposed earlier that gaming serves some of the same societal function in today's youth as explicit mythological systems have in indigenous cultures. For us—unwittingly, as a rule—these states experienced in gaming are a spontaneous reengagement with that level of collectivity from a place of our individual conscious isolation in highly differentiated and pluralistic modern culture.

In this regard, what Jung called his "collective unconscious," with its spontaneous generation of numinous and exotic archetypal identities in states of high absorption, and whose collective commonality he wrongly thought could be explained only biologically, is actually the same as Durkheim's collective consciousness in more tribal societies, and now in gaming clans.

Both offer fully available and explicit mythological images and narratives as part of a daily engaged virtual life. Durkeim's collective *consciousness* becomes *unconscious* in us as we lose the explicit externalized mythic and ritual markers for that level of deeper collectivity. Gaming, with its archetypal roles and avatars, is similarly making Jung's collective unconscious more directly available and externalized for the shared social engagement and sanctioning of what would otherwise be limited to ostensibly private higher states of consciousness in individual high absorbers.

Jung's collective unconscious, which descriptively at least covers the structures that are contacted in what psychologists call "altered states," literally is Durkheim's collective consciousness in traditional mythologically centered societies, and is becoming so again for gaming participants. Viewed from this sociological side of the states of consciousness literature, highly imaginative absorbers are more deeply attuned to the collective social field, as human consciousness itself is already social at all of its levels.[78] Gaming creates its own externalized and supported forms of absorption and provides the archetypal patterns that would otherwise emerge in us only individually through dreams and meditations. Indeed, Preston has argued that exposure to virtual reality (here gaming) allows experiences of absorption not typically or easily available to those who rate naturally lower in trait imaginative absorption.[79]

To be absorbed in consciousness—be it in lucid dreams, intense fantasy, or meditation—is to be absorbed in the social field more deeply than is possible with ordinary consciousness. Because consciousness itself is collective, and because the high absorber is entering the level provided in traditional times by externalized ritual and myth, gaming fulfills much the same function for members of contemporary Western individualistic society. Specifically, it offers an externalized absorptive consciousness with provided patterns that are accordingly socially structured and simultaneously shared; in so doing, it offers some of the support of tribal societies, which individual high absorbers in the West have lost in their only ostensibly "private" lucid dreams and meditations.

Absorption in consciousness on the level peak or numinous feeling and archetypal content is identical to absorption in deeper levels of a shared social field, as seen precisely in the commonalities across individual altered state reports that Durkheim explained. Jung's psychological approach, however,

required something further and "biological." Specifically, Jung asked how people could be so similar in what they felt to be their most truly "private" and "inward" moments. In fact, the altered-state research literature demonstrates, from a sociological point of view, that the further you go in and down, the more you go simultaneously out and into a commonality.

That gaming is more popular in Asian societies (i.e., Korea, Japan, China) makes sense along these lines: these are already community-oriented societies, so while modernizing and simultaneously losing their traditions, they have a more accurate attunement to the social bases of these traditions and so are more ready to engage them in new forms through gaming.[80] Thus much gaming is done in "Bangs" (computer cafes) in Korea and at publicly attended competitions.[81] Likewise, in the West, the LAN (when groups of gamers bring their hardware together in one real-world location to create a "local area network") is a widely popular way to game. Indeed, much gaming is social, in that it is online and for groups to share simultaneously. Such games are already set up as a collective social field in which contact with the sense of the numinous and mythological is explicit and, therefore, can be socially engaged.

That more experienced gamers tend to shift to a third-person field perspective within their games and prefer such patterns makes sense both in terms of the witnessing and lucidity levels they are reaching *and* as what one would expect at deeper levels of a shared social field of consciousness. They are reaching into a more detached witnessing as well as deeper into Mead's level of the generalized social other. The social field as field is coming into view as the deeply internalized structure of all our experience.[82]

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13

Sleep Paralysis, Lucid Dreams, and the Non-physical

David J. Hufford

My career has been devoted to the experience-centered study of beliefs and related experiences that lie outside the conventional paradigm of modern society—what is often called "folk belief." I have done this research in the context of modern medicine, joining the Department of Behavioral Science at Penn State's College of Medicine in 1974, where I remained for more than 30 years until my retirement in 2007. I chose that setting because I have seen medicine, especially psychiatry, as a main force in modernity's resistance to traditional spiritual (not necessarily religious) beliefs and, particularly, the experiential claims (hallucination? delusion?) often associated with those beliefs. I have been concerned with questioning, evaluating, and eventually challenging those academic "traditions of disbelief," traditions where "dream" is a convenient means of dismissing extraordinary claims.[1]

My research during that time has been almost exclusively devoted to the study of the experiences of others, although informed by my personal life (as is anyone's work). So I was pleased to accept our editors' invitation that we authors include our own experiences within our chapters. I do so with a caveat: I offer brief accounts of my experiences as illustrations, because I know them in greater detail than I could the experiences of anyone else. I am not a person who seems to have any particular "psychic abilities." I am not a "sensitive." The vast majority of the dreams I recall are quite ordinary, and I do not claim that being mine gives these experiences special weight. I assume that many others have had experiences similar to the ones I will recount. The importance of these experiences lies in the way that they are distributed, with strangely consistent content, among individuals and across cultures. My own encounters, and the high prevalence of these experiences cross-culturally, challenges most conventional explanations, including the idea that experiences like this are limited to certain "kinds of people," such as those

who are "fantasy prone."[2] It seems clear that, in fact, they are the common property of humanity.

Spiritual belief traditions around the world involve dreams and dream-related events. My career was launched by a tradition regarding sleep paralysis, a bizarre event related to dreaming but not itself a dream in any ordinary sense. I begin my chapter with that topic.

Terror in the Night

In December 1963, I was a college sophomore. Having just completed the last of my final exams for the term, I was tired. I went to bed in my off-campus room at about 6 o'clock, looking forward to a long and uninterrupted night's sleep. In that, I was mistaken. About 2 hours later, I was awakened by the sound of my door being opened, and footsteps approached the bed. I was lying on my back and the door was straight ahead of me. But the room was pitch dark, so when I opened my eyes I couldn't see a thing. I tried to turn on the light beside my bed, but I couldn't move or speak. I was paralyzed. The footsteps came to the side of my bed, and I felt the mattress go down as someone climbed onto the bed, knelt on my chest, and began to strangle me. I thought that I was dying. But much worse than the feelings of being strangled were the sensations associated with what was on top of me. I had an overwhelming impression of *evil*, and my reaction was primarily revulsion. Whatever was on my chest was not only destructive, it was disgusting. I shrank from it. I struggled to move, but it was as though I could not find the "controls." Somehow I no longer knew how to move. But then I did move, first my hand and then my whole body. I leaped out of bed, heart racing, and turned on the light. The room was empty. I ran downstairs where my landlord sat watching TV. "Did someone go past you just now?" He looked at me like I was crazy and said "no." I never forgot that experience, but I told no one about it for the next eight years. I had never heard of an experience anything like this, so I could not expect a lot of sympathetic understanding if I did tell someone. And I was certain that I had been awake during the episode, but I knew that if I said this was anything but a scary dream, I would be judged crazy!

Eight years later, in 1971, I was doing my doctoral dissertation fieldwork

in Newfoundland, Canada. There I encountered the Newfoundland tradition called "the Old Hag." When you "have the Old Hag," Newfoundlanders said, you awoke to find yourself unable to move. The *hag*, an evil, terrifying *something*, could be heard coming, footsteps approaching. The hag would enter your room, come to your bed, and press you, crushing the breath out of you. If the experience is not interrupted, they said, it could end in death. My informants claimed that this happens to many people in Newfoundland. The conventional explanation of such traditions is that in various ways tradition gives rise to stories that claim experiential evidence. The traditional beliefs and narratives come first, they morph into experiential stories, and they may eventually give rise to supporting experiences as a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy. In the scholarly view, the most common way for this to happen would be a dream based on having heard traditional accounts: "You say you believe this because of your experience, but science says that you had that experience because you believed. Seeing is not believing; believing is seeing!" But for me, this made no sense. The intruder in 1963 came into my room from a cultural void.

My 1963 experience, combined with the complex Newfoundland tradition that was practically identical to it, formed the basis for my career as I left Newfoundland to join the Behavioral Science faculty at Penn State's College of Medicine: the experience-centered study of spirit belief traditions. This pursuit has challenged conventional scholarly wisdom and led to some rather startling discoveries. I found that Newfoundlanders were correct in that the experience is common on the island—almost one in five having had it. Later, I was also able to show that the experience is as common among people who do *not* have a tradition about it as it is among those who do—for example, among my medical students. As in my case, the experiences of these students were indistinguishable from those in Newfoundland except for the language used; Newfoundlanders called it the Old Hag, but my medical students and I had no name for it.

I even found an example in William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*:

> Suddenly I felt something come into the room and stay close to my bed. It remained only a minute or two. I did not recognize it by any ordinary sense, and yet there was a horribly unpleasant "sensation" connected with it. It stirred something more at the roots of my being than any ordinary perception. The feeling had something of the quality of a very large tearing vital pain spreading chiefly over the chest, but within the organism—and yet the feeling was not

> pain so much as abhorrence. At all events, something was present with me, and I knew its presence far more surely than I have ever known the presence of any fleshly living creature. I was conscious of its departure as of its coming: an almost instantaneously swift going through the door, and the "horrible sensation" disappeared.[3]

This description is very similar to my own experience. James uses the account to illustrate "the reality of the unseen," which he considered a central aspect of *spiritual* belief. *Spiritual* means relating to *spirit*. *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* defines *spirit* as "1. The animating or life giving principle in humans and animals. 2. The immaterial part of a corporeal being."[4] Despite vague and ambiguous usages in the academic literature, this has been the basic meaning of these terms throughout history to the present.

As I found evidence that this weird experience is common, I was able to show that it is what sleep researchers call *sleep paralysis* (SP). But I also found a great deal of accurate knowledge on the topic in folk tradition that is absent from the scientific literature. In fact, it required a year of research for me to be confident that SP and the Newfoundland term "Old Hag" refer to the same event, because the scientific SP descriptions lacked so much of the detail that was present in the folk accounts.

SP with a presence is rarely included in discussions of "spiritual experience," but the great majority of subjects do consider their SP experience spiritual when it includes a presence. The presence is there in approximately 80 percent of SP episodes.[5] SP is a category of *extraordinary spiritual experiences* (ESEs)—that is, experiences that appear to the subject to be direct perceptions of a non-physical spiritual reality (i.e., *visions*, although they can occur in any sensory mode).[6] I also found that SP with a presence is a major part of spirit traditions of supernatural evil all over the world, such as vampire beliefs and beliefs about witchcraft and sorcery.[7]

In scientific terms, sleep paralysis is a state that occurs either while falling asleep or as one is awakening. Subjectively, SP is characterized by the sense of being fully awake and, usually, fully aware of one's actual environment; that is, the SP subject experiencing this state in his bed at home will be aware that this is where he is. The paralysis is produced by the intrusion into wakefulness of rapid eye movement (REM) atonia, one mechanism of REM sleep—the sleep stage during which most dreams occur. REM atonia is a flaccid paralysis in which voluntary muscle tone is lost. It functions to prevent dreamers from moving their physical bodies when

moving their "dream bodies," thus preserving sleep during dreaming. The loss of tone is sudden and dramatic as REM begins, so in a sleep laboratory REM can actually be identified by loss of muscle tone in an electromyography (EMG) recording, just as it is identified by the characteristic eye movements detected by electro-oculograph (EOG). In sleep laboratories, SP subjects have been shown to have accurate awareness of their real surroundings and the ability to recall sensory input received while in the SP state. SP, although incorporating at least one aspect of REM, is not a dream in any ordinary sense. Thus lucid dreaming and SP share the sense of full wakefulness while experiencing REM, but the two states are distinctly different. We may say that in SP, REM intrudes (or persists) into wakefulness, whereas in lucid dreaming, wakefulness intrudes into REM.

Two additional points about REM are important regarding these experiences. First, REM follows a distinct circadian rhythm, so certain times of the day and the night are more likely to support REM experiences. For those with a normal REM schedule, REM is not likely at bedtime, making "sleep-onset REM" relatively rare. That reduces the likelihood of SP immediately on falling asleep, but REM becomes increasingly strong during the night, which is why SP is especially common on awakening late, 3 or 4 a.m. REM continues to be strong during the morning, so going back to sleep in the morning (as I did when I had my lucid dream) or taking a morning nap encourages REM experiences. Second, when one is deprived of REM sleep, REM becomes even stronger (called "REM rebound") and more likely to intrude into wakefulness. Several things can reduce REM sleep and lead to rebound, such as excessive alcohol, some medications, and sleep deprivation. Like most college students, I was chronically sleep deprived in school, and my SP episode occurred at the end of final exams, an especially low sleep time.

SP and lucid dreaming also have complicated relationships with out-of-body experiences (OBEs), dreams of deceased loved ones, and precognitive dreams. Each of these is associated with spiritual beliefs, in both modern and ancient culture, and in both Western and non-Western societies, making lucid dreaming a powerful influence in the development of spiritual belief.

My Dreams, Lucid and Other

In this chapter, I use the term *lucid dreaming* in the conventional sense: the experience of becoming aware of the fact that one *is* dreaming, during a dream. Lucid dreaming occurs in degrees. The lucidity may be transient. The lucid dreamer may or may not have the ability to control the contents of the dream. I also take *lucidity* in dreams to mean a fairly normal form of consciousness that leaves intact many of the dreamer's ordinary thinking capacities, such as the ability to make inferences.

The same year that I first experienced sleep paralysis with a presence, I had my only really complete lucid dream. I recall several lucid dreams from as long ago as high school, but most of them were brief and the lucidity was transitory. But the lucid dream that occurred when I was a college sophomore was long and had some very interesting features:

> *I recall "awakening" in a dream of an outdoor scene that seemed a bit like the small city, Williamsport, Pennsylvania, where my college was located. As is common in my dreams, the resemblance was vague. Being somewhat familiar with lucid dreams, I was delighted. I recall immediately wondering what I should do, realizing that the possibilities were wide open. As I had that thought, I turned toward a wooden fence next to where I was standing, let out a loud yell, and smashed through the fence—I don't know why. I did not have complete and constant control the dream content, and the scene changed without my volition. Next I found myself running down a city street chased by a sizable crowd. Still aware that I was dreaming, I was unconcerned about my pursuers. I turned and ran into a building on my left and up some stairs. I came to a landing with an open window and dove out, flying Superman style over the city. Once more the scene changed and I was in a room on campus. Again the resemblance was vague, but the room was similar to a common room in my college's Student Union Building.*

At this point I need to provide more context. The dream was taking place on a Saturday morning. In my waking life I had agreed to have lunch with a friend, and he was going to come by my off-campus room at 10:30 a.m. to pick me up. I never got enough sleep in college, and I had some bad habits when dealing with my alarm clock. This particular morning I had been awakened by the alarm at 9 a.m., leaving me plenty of time to get ready. But instead of rising, I had reset the clock to get more rest and returned to sleep. It was at that point that my lucid dream began. As I found my dream self in the common room, I began to worry about whether I would wake on time—so I did have a clear memory of events and plans in my waking life. But although I was fully lucid, I had the impression that I had to wake at 11 a.m., which in reality would be too late. This discrepancy proved important and very interesting when I finally woke up. Worrying about the time, I kept checking the clocks in my dream, figuring that I would make sure to wake

myself up at 11. Whenever I wanted to check, I would look and find a clock realistically on the wall. That made we wonder if I could wake myself, so I tried "surfacing." I found that just by willing it, I could, as it seemed, rise up into wakefulness to the point where I could see the sunlight on my eyelids and hear the birds singing outside my window. Then, just as easily, I descended back into my dream. Then, when the dream clocks said 11 o'clock, I woke myself. As I became fully awake and saw 11 on my bedside clock, I immediately thought, "Oh no! I'm late." But I then saw that my watch said 10 o'clock, just the time I needed it to be. Further investigation showed that when I had reset my alarm clock, I had inadvertently changed the clock time instead of the alarm time, setting it one hour ahead, but somehow my "dream time" had allowed for this and kept me on schedule. This dream gave me a lot to think about!

Several features of my lucid dream were typical, especially flying. My awareness of and concern for waking on time fits with the typical lucid awareness of waking life during the dream. I have seen some discussion of whether the lucid dreamer can wake at will. Apparently some dreamers cannot, but I found it simple. The way that my dream, without my awareness, took my confused reset of the alarm and made my dream time consistent with what I needed in real time was, and is, fascinating to me. I have long had the ability to awaken at the precise minute I need to. This is not so consistent that I feel confident without an alarm, but it does often happen even without my intention. For example, if the alarm does not go off when it should, I frequently wake up at the intended time anyway. This seems a common ability. But in the case of my lucid dream, there was the added factor of "somebody" having allowed for my mistake in resetting the alarm. Although I was aware by then of Freudian notions of unconscious processes, this instance seemed different. It seemed to require a sort of intention and active intelligence that I would not have expected. I was reminded of this when, years later, I read George Tyrrell's Apparitions (1942) and encountered his concept of the "stage-carpenter"—a metaphorical, subliminal homunculus who constructs information for presentation in "the theater of consciousness." Although Tyrrell was speaking of the content of apparitional visions (e.g., seeing a ghost), the process of thoughtful construction outside of awareness is resonant with my dream clocks.

In addition to my terrifying attack and my pleasant but puzzling lucid dream, I had one other extraordinary sleep-related experience in my youth: a

clear and documented precognitive dream. One summer when I was 15, I spent a weekend at my grandparents' summer cottage. It was about 20 miles from the village where I lived, and it did not have a telephone. While there, from Friday through Sunday, I was cut off from any outside communication. That Friday night I dreamed that my brother, my girlfriend, and I walked through the village park to the edge of the lake where our town was situated. The edge of the park was a seawall, and we were standing on the wall about three feet above the water. The weather was gray and stormy, with wind and waves, but no rain. As we stood looking at the lake, I suddenly realized that my girlfriend was no longer with us. I dove into the lake, with the casual ability common in dreams, and swam beneath the surface looking for her. I could not find her, but I did find a pile of broken glass (it looked like broken soda bottles) with a child's bathing slipper (a kind of rubber footwear common for kids at that time when walking in water on a rough surface) atop the pile. The slipper had a clear cut through the sole. Then I woke up. I was extremely impressed by the vividness of the dream. I did not think of it as precognitive, and I would not have been sure what it meant even if that had occurred to me. Even so, I was overwhelmed by its clarity and apparent importance. It just seemed very important. I told the family members who were at the cottage about the dream immediately. Then I wrote down an account of it. The following day (Sunday), when I returned home in the evening, I called my girlfriend as usual. To my amazement, she told me that she and her family had visited Lake Ontario (the Great Lake was about an hour north of our village in the Finger Lakes); while walking in the water at the edge of the beach there, she had stepped on broken glass and cut the sole of her foot badly. She had required stitches and was now walking with a crutch. I was amazed. My girlfriend's accidental injury struck me as obviously the meaning of my dream, but in a very odd way. This, like the accommodation of my error in resetting the alarm clock, suggested something like Tyrell's "stage-carpenter." This time the homunculus had almost composed a little poem about what would happen on the following day—organized, clear in its reference after the fact, but obscure at the time. I spent a lot of time pondering that experience, and thought more about it a few years later in 1963.

These three events had an interesting effect on me, an effect that I think is a common result of anomalous experience. I was now convinced that the world was a more complicated and weird place than I had been led to believe

—which meant that the modern "standard model" must have some serious deficiencies. These events, however, did not give me a particular new model. They made me, in a technical sense, "dis-illusioned" with the world picture I had been given. This created—as I believe it does for many—far more openness to unconventional ideas and beliefs than I would otherwise have realized. It did not make me reject either science or reason. In fact, I entered college with a double major in math and physics. But it did make me question whether current science was as near to completion as some suggested, and it was reasoning from my experiences that led to this conclusion. These somewhat contrarian attitudes were supported over the years as I encountered the extraordinary experiences of others, first by happenstance, then as a result of systematic research.

History and the Dreams of Modernity

Dreams have always fascinated people, and the interpretation of dreams has been a preoccupation throughout history. Dream interpretations range from the spiritual to the reductive. In modern times, Freud's psychoanalytic interpretation of dreams gave the topic even more energy and controversy, and scientific, academic, and popular thought today about the significance and meaning of dreams is very diverse. Within this fascinating stew of ideas, lucid dreams are a somewhat exotic and popular variety. I just Googled the term "lucid dreaming" and got more than 4 million hits. Most of the items on the first page referred to instructions for inducing lucid dreams, supporting the results of a 2012 BBC survey, which reported that lucid dreaming is a rising "nocturnal hobby."[8] Indeed, even though the term "lucid dreaming" is only 100 years old, this kind of dream has been the subject of study and teaching since ancient times.[9] Aristotle mentions the experience of becoming aware that one is dreaming during a dream. *Yoga nidra* is an Indian esoteric practice related to lucid dreaming, although during this state of very deep relaxation the subject remains aware of the real physical environment rather than being immersed in a dream world. The *yoga nidra* state is sometimes referred to as *lucid sleeping* to distinguish it from lucid dreaming. In some forms of Buddhism, awareness was cultivated in all states of consciousness including dreaming.

Understanding current attitudes toward and theories of lucid dreaming requires some knowledge of the intellectual history of modern thought about dreams. In ancient cultures, dreams had supernatural connotations. Many Egyptian gods had dream temples dedicated to them. Supplicants seeking divine guidance would sleep in these temples—the first recorded instance of temple "incubation"—and the following morning a Master of the Secret Things would interpret what the dreamer reported. The practice of dream incubation, also called temple sleep, is found in many parts of the world. Sometimes incubation included healing, or dream messages with healing instructions, as in the case of temples to the Greek god Asclepius. (*Dream incubation* is also a modern term for going to sleep with the explicit intention of having a particular kind of dream, including lucid dream induction.)

Divine messages in dream form were well known to the ancient Jews and appear frequently in Jewish scripture, albeit less so in the Christian Testament. For example, Joseph's dreams recounted in *Genesis* foretell his good fortune and serve to bring it about. Dreams have been regarded in a similar way in most non-Western cultures. For example, the Iroquois considered dreams, sometimes called "wishes of the soul," to be one of the most important sources of spiritual knowledge. This included both self-knowledge and knowledge of the past and future. Dreams were shared and community decisions as well as individual ones were often based on dream content.

Using ancient and non-Western sources, 19th-century anthropologists theorized that dreams played a major part in the development of primitive beliefs about the soul and other spirits. For example, Edward B. Tylor, one of the founders of social anthropology, considered dreams to be a primary source used by "primitive man" to attempt to understand the world. He located the origins of religion in animism—the "belief in spiritual beings"—and interpreted this belief as efforts to explain "two groups of biological problems": (1) What is the difference between conscious and nonconscious bodies (sleeping, in trance, or dead), and what animates the conscious body? and (2) What are the entities that appear in dreams and visions, where do they come from?[10] These ideas about belief in spirits and its relation to dreams persist to the present day. For example, *The New World Encyclopedia* says that

> Dreams and hallucinations were likely central to the development of animistic theory in general.

> Seeing the phantasmic figures of friends and other chimaeric, night-time apparitions may have led people to the dualistic separation of soul and body that is common within animistic traditions. Of course, hallucinatory figures, both in dreams and waking life, are not necessarily those of the living. From the reappearance of friends or enemies, dead or living alike, primitive man was likely led to the belief that there existed an incorporeal part of man, which existed apart from the body.[11]

Even many contemporary anthropologists view dreams in this way. For example, in 1994 Canadian anthropologist Jean-Paul Goulet used the words *dream* and *vision* almost synonymously and assumed that both are internally generated.[12] According to these interpretations, the belief that dream life takes place in a domain populated by spirits, and that the dreamer travels there in spirit form, is an understandable mistake arising from ignorance of the true nature of the world. This is the boundary between primitive and modern.

Dreams of the Dead and Materialism

Reading scholarly accounts of belief in spirits and the nature of dreams, one would never guess that the beliefs being characterized as "primitive" are common among 21st-century Americans—yet overwhelming data show that they are. For example, a 2003 Harris Poll found that 84 percent of Americans believe in the survival of the soul after death, including 78 percent of those with postgraduate degrees, and 51 percent of the public believes in ghosts.[13] Similar findings have been made repeatedly for decades. This is not surprising when one considers that the experience of visits of deceased loved ones to the bereaved (often called "after-death contacts" [ADCs]) have been shown to be common, experienced by about one third of the general population (the rate is much higher among widows and widowers) and often very helpful in the grieving process.[14] These ADCs are another kind of extraordinary spiritual experience related to lucid dreaming.

ADCs and related beliefs are linked to dreams in several ways, the most important of which is dreams of deceased loved ones, some of which are lucid. These dreams are common, with studies suggesting that more than half of grieving people have such dreams, and they seem to be an important part of the grieving process.[15] When such dreams are lucid, they tend to be

especially clear and compelling. For example, the following dream was included in a study by Harvard dream researcher Deirdre Barrett.[16] The subject is a female college student:

> I had a lucid dream (i.e., she was aware she was dreaming during the dream) about my grandmother that was probably the best dream I have ever had. In this dream I was little, about 5 or 6 years old, and I was in the bathroom at my grandmother's house. She was giving me a bath in this big claw-footed tub. The old steam radiator was turned on, making it very cozy. I knew that I was dreaming and that I was getting to see my grandmother well again. After the bath, she lifted me out onto the spiral cotton rug and dried me with a blue towel. When that was done, she said she had to leave now; this seemed to mean for heaven. I said, "Good-bye, Grandma. I love you." She said, "I love you, too, Mary." I woke up feeling wonderful. She had been delirious in the last few months of her life, so I'd never really gotten to say good-bye.

Academic dream researchers accept the modern/primitive boundary and do not generally discuss or evaluate the common belief that such dreams are real contact. But along with many surveys, my own ethnographic research indicates that many—probably most—individuals who have these dreams do consider them to be *real*, and that is one reason that they appear to be helpful in the grief process. These dreams are intimately related to the waking visions of deceased loved ones noted previously.

A quick look at advice online regarding these dreams shows that contemporary belief about them is much like what Tylor and other anthropologists have so quickly dismissed as "primitive." For example, on her blog, counselor Erin Pavlina recently replied to the following question, with the headline "Are dreams about deceased loved ones real?"[17]

> **Question:** The other night I had a really vivid dream about my deceased grandfather. He told me all kinds of interesting things and it felt so real. Was it really his spirit talking to me or just a dream? How can I tell the difference?

Clearly the questioner entertains the possibility but recognizes the controversy. Pavlina responds, "It is possible for deceased loved ones to visit us in our dream," and says that this is particularly likely for lucid dreamers. Pavlina gives suggestions for distinguishing such dreams from ordinary dreaming, and gives an example of her own in which her grandfather told her that she would have a miscarriage, which she subsequently did have.

Beliefs about dreams and spirits are not merely "survivals" from our primitive past. These beliefs arise from experience and are consistently redeveloped by modern people even though they have been taught that such

beliefs are not tenable in the modern world.

Ideas of what is *modern* are formed by scholars as a sophisticated contrast to previous naïve ("primitive") beliefs. If it were true that dreams are well on the way to a complete material explanation consistent with materialist conceptions of the universe in general, then belief that dreams have *spiritual* significance in a traditional sense would be naïve, out of place in modernity. It would be primitive, part of a set of beliefs shared with societies that have less knowledge of science and the world in general. The common underlying theme in this modernist account is that naïve beliefs arise and are supported by ignorance and poor reasoning, that they are nonrational or even irrational. Such beliefs are also said to be nonempirical, indicating that they are not properly based on *observation*, the basis of modern scientific knowledge.

This conclusion derives from the common modern assumption that the real world is entirely composed of matter, a view variously called *physicalism*, *naturalism*, or *materialism*. Materialism is a dominant view in modern science, but not the only view. If materialism is correct, then spirits cannot have real existence, and *spirit* becomes a metaphor as in "the American spirit." Scientific materialism also suggests that the ancient and universal idea of prophecy and foreknowledge, often but not always conveyed by spirits, is impossible. Consequently, precognition and ghosts are tossed in the same paranormal wastebasket by today's materialists. The materialist assumption suggests that the extensive modern scientific knowledge about dreaming (such as the role of REM mechanisms) is the beginning of a complete explanation of dreams that would include only material mechanisms from neurophysiology to sociology—a so-called *reductive* explanation. Because science cannot at present give a complete account of dreaming that rules out spiritual ideas, like many reductive theories this view is what philosopher Karl Popper called "promissory materialism." Regarding the materialist reduction of mind to brain neuroscientist Sir John Eccles said:

> We regard promissory materialism as superstition without a rational foundation. . . . Promissory materialism is simply a religious belief held by dogmatic materialists . . . who often confuse their religion with their science.[18]

I agree.

The skeptic asserts that it is naïve but understandable for people lacking

scientific education to imagine that their dreams have spiritual meaning. In my work I have concluded that many spiritual beliefs about dreams and related phenomena are actually quite rational and empirically supported. A primary source of that support is extraordinary spiritual experiences, especially those that are complex with stable patterns across different cultures and belief systems, and that are not symptoms of psychopathology.[19] This includes extraordinary dreams. The conventional explanation of anomalous experiences is that they reflect cultural patterns learned by the subject. Nevertheless, the consistent similarity of content in some major extraordinary spiritual experiences cannot be explained in that way, because their patterns are consistent across cultures and in the absence of cultural models. Neither can they be dismissed as mere brain-generated hallucinations, because no known hallucinations have such complex phenomenologies across subjects without cultural input. Therefore, the experiences have the appearance that we associate with accurate reports from independent witnesses. This is not the same as arguing that the beliefs are *true*, but it does show that they are not obviously false. In that regard, this position is sympathetic to the possibility that beliefs based on these experiences may be true. My *conclusions* are based on systematic research using conventional scholarly and scientific methods, but a major part of my *motivation* comes from personal experiences.

Because of my precognitive dream, I cannot doubt that dreams sometimes convey knowledge of the future. My lucid dream made me quite certain that not all dreams are the same, and some involve very special states of consciousness. My SP experience, together with my subsequent research, convinced me that some extraordinary spiritual experiences are supported by remarkable cross-cultural stability, a pattern that contradicts conventional explanations. All of this makes me open to reports of spirit visits and accurate predictions of the future in lucid dreams. It is also clear that SP, lucid dreams, and precognitive dreams involve REM sleep, as do ordinary dreams. There are several other connections between lucid dreams and spirit beliefs, but I will only discuss one: out-of-body experiences.

Out-of-Body Experiences and Lucid Dreams

Efforts to induce lucid dreams, *yoga nidra* and yoga meditation in the corpse pose, and astral projection all create a likely setting for the onset of SP. Beginning with my first SP survey in Newfoundland, I found that the great majority (but *not* all) of SP episodes happen to people lying on their back. I think this is because that position allows complete relaxation with a minimum of somatosensory input to maintain full, normal waking consciousness.[20] *Yoga nidra*, astral projection, most other OBE methods, and most lucid dream induction—all of which are related in several ways—require prolonged stillness in the supine position. As a result, these meditative practices often lead to SP, often enough that SP has been suggested as a necessary or very useful aspect of inducing both lucid dreaming from the waking state and OBEs. The literature of astral projection, as some traditions have called OBEs, actually describes SP as a common element in the practice, using the term "astral catalepsy."[21] Robert Monroe, an OBE research pioneer, reports what are obviously SP episodes early in his efforts to achieve the out-of-body state.[22]

The connection of lucid dreaming and OBEs is too complex to cover thoroughly here. Some skeptics consider OBEs to *be* lucid dreams, and some OBE enthusiasts consider lucid dreaming to be a good entry to OBEs. In Robert Monroe's description of the locales in which OBEs take place, Locale II (perhaps "the Astral") seems very much like the dream world, including its malleability. At any rate, it is clear phenomenologically that flying in a lucid dream is a great deal like having an OBE and that some OBEs have a lot in common with some lucid dreams.

The connection of SP with OBEs is similarly complex. It seems that the basic link is that REM sleep is involved in both SP and lucid dreaming, and in both cases it is REM sleep mixed with wakefulness. REM sleep is obviously an altered state and all indications suggest that it is an altered state that is closely associated with OBEs.

As I interviewed SP subjects, I discovered that for a minority of experiencers the sleep paralysis turns into an OBE.[23] In some cases, there is no clear OBE sensation, as for the subject who reported that she was being violently pressed into the bed but also felt that she was being lifted up "at least two feet above the bed," and then dropped back onto the bed "with considerable force" as the experience ended.[24] This kind of contradictory description is fairly common in accounts of anomalous experience, indicating

phenomenological categories outside normal experience. One Newfoundlander said he felt a "very cold, dead weight—great fear with no apparent reason, couldn't move anything, only open eyes—had feeling of looking down at myself from separate place."[25] A Pennsylvania subject said, "I woke up and felt very tired, but not able to move, felt weak. Didn't seem like I was in myself."[26]

Other SP/OBE sensations are more fully developed. For example, one of my Pennsylvania subjects decided not to fight the paralysis:

> I really felt that I rose up out of my body. . . . it felt so fast to me that I had no control over what I was doing. . . . I could not touch the ground, I was trying to—as I was looking down at the ground I was concentrating on touching it, and I couldn't do that. So there was something that either pulled me or I just went on my own. . . . (opposite my bed) there's a window. . . . Well, it's just like I got *pulled*towards there. And I looked out the window and there was someone there. . . . I wasn't afraid of this person, but this person wasn't friendly either. . . . But this person was trying to get me to come through this window and this person had almost—this person didn't care to convince me or coax me to come. Just had an attitude, "Well, if you come through the window you'll follow me." That scared, that scared me pretty bad![27]

She struggled back to the bed and several times thought she had gotten back into her body, only to find that she was floating again. All this time, the figure remained outside the window beckoning. Eventually the subject did succeed, and spent half an hour sitting up going over the details. She subsequently assured me that she was certain that she was awake during the experience and that it was *real*. She also said that if the paralysis experience ever returned, she would most definitely not submit to it willingly.

During the past two decades, the Internet has played a role in allowing those with sleep paralysis to make inquiries and contact others in a way that modern stigma had prevented. One of the early experiencers' websites devoted to the subject ends with reference to "a gateway to Out of the Body and Lucid Dreaming," stating that "Beyond the Fear, There Is a Gate."[28]

Without realizing it, I had a brush with SP/OBE in my first SP episode. In my 1963 "encounter," I reached for the lamp beside my bed but was unable to turn it on. Because the room was pitch dark, I could not see the lamp, but I knew where it was. I felt my hand moving where the lamp should be, but I could not touch it. Then the rest of the experience unfolded rapidly and I forgot about the lamp. But I always wondered about that. Subjects do not report moving briefly and then becoming paralyzed, as I had seemed to do.

About 12 years after my experience, and after I had embarked on my formal research into the topic of SP, I found the answer while I was attending a conference in New Orleans. I had an early morning breakfast meeting, after which I returned to my hotel room to get some more sleep. It was morning and the room was light. I awoke to the sound of people entering my room. I opened my eyes and felt multiple invisible "presences," but I was paralyzed. I looked down at myself and could see my arms folded across my chest. I was lying supine and, I realized that I was in SP. As always, I struggled to move, and suddenly I moved my right arm. I straightened it and flung it out to my right—but in the bright morning light I could see it still lying across my chest. I suddenly realized that I was having an "out of the arm" experience. No longer concerned about the presences entering the room or the fact that the rest of my body remained paralyzed, I moved my "astral hand" through the curtains on the window next to the bed. Nothing. I could neither move nor feel the curtains. Then I reached above my head and through the wall to see what would happen. What happened, to my disappointment, was that my physical arm moved and all was back to "normal." I got up, dressed, and took a long walk while I thought about what had just occurred. During that walk, I realized that I now knew why I could not turn on the lamp by my bed in my 1963 SP experience. I had reached for it with "the wrong arm"—my "astral arm." It reminded me of a fantasy I once read about a man who discovers, to his sorrow, that invisibility means nothing in the dark.

Conclusion

SP, lucid dreams, and dreams of the dead are REM sleep phenomena. OBEs are related to REM sleep at least in terms of their induction. Moreover, each of these experiences is often perceived as spiritual by those who have them. In part, they seem spiritual because they are non-physical but compellingly realistic, but also because they incorporate anomalous events such as telepathy, precognition, and spirit contact. To the materialist skeptic, this is reason enough to discount the experiences as mere dreams. As I have already discussed, however, the complex, cross-culturally stable content of these experiences does not lend itself to conventional reductionistic explanation. Furthermore, there is evidence that telepathy can occur in dreams.[29] In fact, a

variety of "psi experiences" are more common in dreams than when awake.[30] Also, there is a growing body of evidence indicating that precognition, perhaps the most physically challenging of paranormal claims, has a basis in reality, including in dreams.[31] I consider the evidence for such events strong, perhaps in part because of my personal experiences recounted earlier in this chapter. However, it must be said that the prevailing academic attitude on these topics dismisses all such evidence when it supports belief in phenomena that lie outside the current materialist paradigm. Nevertheless, a growing number of scientists, as well as most members of the lay public, support the idea that these anomalies show us a very important aspect of reality that we have rejected too hastily.[32]

Given the academic bias on these issues, it is not surprising, then, that Stephen LaBerge, a pioneering researcher of lucid dreaming, began the chapter "Dreaming, Illusion, and Reality" in his *Lucid Dreaming* with a quote that echoes E. B. Tylor's theory of the origins of animism:[33]

> "In the ages of the rude beginning of culture," wrote Nietzsche, "man believed that he was discovering a second real world in dream, and here is the origin of all metaphysics. Without dreams, mankind would never have had occasion to invent such a division of the world. The parting of soul and body goes also with this way of interpreting dreams; likewise, the idea of a soul's apparitional body: whence all belief in ghosts, and apparently, too, in gods."[34]

After the quote, LaBerge went on to say, "I am inclined to agree with Nietzsche in placing the blame for belief in ghosts, gods, and life after death on the doorstep of the dream."

In this chapter, LaBerge proposes that OBEs are naïve or "pre-lucid" dreams—that is, lucid dreams that the dreamer does not recognize as such; he calls this the "OBE as misinterpreted lucid dream" interpretation. He bases his conclusion largely on the fact that OBEs, although often compellingly realistic, also have many perceptual inaccuracies. For example, although an individual during an OBE may look back and see her own body lying there in bed, she may alternatively see an empty bed or a different body. LaBerge grants that there are some well-documented instances of accurate OBE perception that seem beyond chance. These he accounts for by telepathy as the simplest explanation. However, he does not discuss the near-death experience (NDE) OBE. NDEs contain many well-documented veridical perceptions, and the NDE experiencer is sometimes perceived by someone

else during the episode (a "crisis apparition"). Perhaps even more important is the fact that we find so many consistent patterns in these experiences across cultures. I have noted the same issue previously in connection with SP experiences with a presence.

LaBerge seems to insist on reliable experimental verification for such experiences if they are to be taken seriously. For example, he gives a persuasive example of a precognitive dream but says that such "anecdotes" are unconvincing. That would, of course, apply to my own example discussed earlier. This issue plagues the investigation of what is commonly called "the paranormal." It is possible to create experimental designs for reasonable facsimiles of some of these phenomena, although our lack of knowledge about them makes it impossible to know whether the experimental conditions are a good fit with what occurs naturally. In these situations, investigators have regularly found effects that are statistically significant although generally small in size, whereas spontaneous events often display very large effects but are dismissed as "anecdotal." It is quite clear that experimental studies of the paranormal do not capture the full scope of the way it emerges outside the laboratory. Furthermore, for some events there is no way (ethically) to create an experiment (such as NDEs or ADCs), yet systematic inquiry yields instances that cannot properly be called anecdotal. Contemporary research increasingly recognizes the need to use a "mixed methods" approach combining quantitative and qualitative methods for valid results, especially when studying complex events.[35] Such multimethod approaches are necessary when studying the paranormal, so rejecting case descriptions and ethnographic interviews as "anecdotes" is unwarranted. Existing data from a variety of methodological standpoints amply support the idea that REM sleep events have characteristics that defy conventional explanations. Even the "telepathy explanation" (scarcely conventional) does a poor job of explaining the complex, cross-cultural pattern of many of these experiences.

We should also challenge LaBerge's agreement with Nietzsche that belief in spirits originates in dreams. Not all OBEs originate in sleep, including NDEs, and a great many ADCs experienced by the bereaved are waking events. In fact, in 1971 the first medical study showing that ADCs are normal and helpful in bereavement, contrary to the conventional opinion at the time, specifically excluded experiences that could have been dreams. Even so, the study found that in a sample of 94 percent of the competent widows and

widowers in one Welsh county, 47.6 percent experienced a visit from the deceased that they considered "significant and real."[36] The convergence and overlap of waking and dreaming experiences greatly complicates efforts to create reductive material explanations.

LaBerge is right to point to perceptual inconsistencies in OBEs. In all spiritual visions, there is a complex mixture of (1) "ordinary dreamlike" content that could easily be interpreted as "imaginary" (e.g., the sleeping OBEer looking back and seeing his bed empty, or meeting a deceased loved one who now seems younger and healthier than in life), (2) metaphorical content that seems or later proves to be veridical (e.g., my precognitive dream), and (3) literally accurate perceptions (e.g., verified reports of the observations of NDEers). This mixture of perceptual types does not seem to support a "naïve realism" view that in these states the percipient simply observes the world as it is—but neither does it support a psychologically reductive explanation. Between these two extremes lies what has been called the *imaginal*, a domain that includes all of the characteristics just noted. It has been proposed as a domain that is real, not imaginary, but represents both physical and non-physical realities. As C. S. Lewis put it, such representations cannot be entirely literal in sensory terms, because the spiritual is nonmaterial and invisible. They must, therefore, be *transposed*, as when a symphony is represented by a piano piece or when an artist represents three dimensions in two-dimensional space. When perceptible objects are transposed to a different domain, they acquire a mixture of characteristics, both literally accurate and different from the original. Many investigators have suggested that spiritual experiences are imaginal in this sense.[37] This interdomain transposition would seem to account for the very similar—but not identical—patterns across subjects and cultures found in varieties of complex visionary experiences, as in NDEs and SP with a presence. While it challenges our ideas of accuracy and veridicality when assessing evidence, this concept challenges even more deeply the reductive materialist explanations that dismiss the apparent reality of visions as fantasy and delusion.

Fascination with dreams is ancient, and knowledge of special varieties of dreams was much richer before the modern era. Modernity's rejection of the non-physical—traditionally meaning the *spiritual*—reduced the idea of dreams and visions to mere glitches in normal brain activity. Extraordinary spiritual experiences were dismissed as psychiatric symptoms, and the related

stigma suppressed open discussion rendering these events invisible.[38] In recent decades, the discovery that visions and extraordinary dreams are common and normal has emerged as part of a larger reevaluation of the materialism of modern thought going on in our society. Of course, this is not a basis for rejecting solid science and systematic reasoning about these experiences. Today a growing number of neuroscientists have joined in challenging the facile dismissal of the nonmaterial.[39] If solid science can open-mindedly address the vast quantity of personal experience documenting the extraordinary nature of REM sleep-related experiences, a whole new discipline can emerge, and we will all be the better for it.

Notes

1. David J. Hufford, *The Terror That Comes in the Night: An Experience-Centered Study of Supernatural Assault Traditions* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982); David J. Hufford, "Traditions of Disbelief," *New York Folklore Quarterly* 8, nos. 3/4 (1982): 47–56 [reprinted in *Talking Folklore* (London) 1, no. 3 (1987)]; William James, *The Varieties of the Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1902).
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14

Unearthing the Paleolithic Mind in Lucid Dreams

Ryan Hurd

Introduction

As humans, we cannot refrain from dreaming or escape the potential to have visions.[1] It is an obvious point, but the implications include the fact that our ancestors have been dreaming and visioning for eons, deep into the prehistoric past. The modern human brain has been around for about 50,000 years, and perhaps for twice that long. The "Creative Explosion," also called the Middle to Upper Paleolithic Transition, is dated to between 45,000 and 35,000 years BP, based on archaeological evidence such as well-preserved cave art and a new diversity of tools.[2] We can safely assume our deep ancestry was capable of all the fancy metacognition that we can do: think about our thoughts, notice our feelings, and notice the roles we play and the moves we make in social arenas.[3]

In a similar fashion, all of the upper possibilities of dreaming and visioning were available to our predecessors. Surely they had boring, repetitive dreams and sexually inappropriate dreams, just like we do. They also were not capable of refraining from having *big dreams* and visionary experiences, which affected their worldviews and their assumptions about the nature of the universe, just like the socialization of spiritual experience and altered states of consciousness does for us today. Big dreams and visions are a class of extraordinary human events that fall all along the wake-sleep spectrum, often hybridizing this spectrum to produce borderland states of consciousness. The universal content of these states includes abstract geometric imagery, moments of non-duality, contact with autonomous spirits and otherworldly figures, high levels of coherency and emotional impact,

and, all the while, the ability to notice these ongoing experiences and react to them in the moment appropriately to accentuate certain features—in a word, *lucidity*.

Lucid dreaming often is discussed as a learnable skill, but it also comes spontaneously, even to those who do not have a framework for the experience. The similarities across cultures suggest lucidity—in its full range—is less dependent on culture and conscious expectation than is usually posited. To be sure, lucid dreaming is a culturally moderated expression. Unfortunately, trends in academia resist comparing states of consciousness across cultures and time, in part a reaction to earlier attempts that involved sweeping generalizations.[4] Even so, lucid dreaming is not a brand-new anomaly, but rather an ancient form of cognition that has its own internal rules and limitations. The central aim of this chapter is to review how lucid dreaming has been reframed in cognitive anthropology as a state of consciousness that has a deep history of expression and is similar to many states that play with the threshold where consensual reality meets private experience. A secondary aim is to integrate this anthropological reframing with the detailed work of psychologists, neuroscientists, and phenomenologists whose studies of lucid dreaming showcase new (or merely forgotten or misunderstood) potentials.

A major implication for the pan-human use of lucid dreams and other threshold-crossing states of consciousness is that, for as long as modern brains and minds have been around, practices promoting these states have likely been employed in social rituals under eco-social stress. Ecopsychologist Jorge Conesa-Sevilla has said:

> The lucid dream, more than any other experience (other than hunting, gathering, chanting, dancing, eating or sex) establishes a link to a Paleolithic mind when it was less disturbed and confused by the synthetic and knew not of meaning-less modern surroundings, when it knew that the "others" were at least role models for imitable behaviors that could have induced a transforming shift in consciousness.[5]

For me, Conesa-Sevilla's phrase "Paleolithic mind" is poetic; I do not mean to assert some magical time machine powered by dreaming cognition. Instead, this label serves as a reminder that humans have been having these neurologically rooted experiences for a long, long time and they have always been impactful. Dreams may seem chaotic, but much of the noise may simply be our own uninitiated minds trying to make sense of dream logic with the

wrong cognitive tools, within a culture that has forgotten how to dream.[6] Evolutionary psychologist and dream researcher Deirdre Barrett has commented that dreams may have even served a more useful role in ancestral environments.[7] As Jayne Gackenbach and Harry Hunt describe in this volume, the further down the rabbit hole you go, the more collective the experience becomes. The well is deep but it continues to draw fresh water. Yet cultures do not promote borderland states of consciousness equally, and some ignore them altogether. One numinous bridge between lucid dreaming and the Paleolithic echoes of our cognitive heritage will be explored in depth in this chapter: the *lucid nightmare*, which highlights emotional potentials and existential realities not currently in vogue in most circles of Western thought, Nonetheless, these experiences continue to bubble up from the chthonic depths.

The "deep" reframing of lucid dreaming consists of three main strands of argument: lucid dreaming as exhibiting autonomous imagination, visionary potential, and phenomenological similarity to other states of consciousness besides "ordinary" dreams.

Before reviewing these components, allow me to define and describe lucid dreaming as I am using the term. I like the minimalist definition: "a dream in which I come to know I am dreaming." I encourage this broad definition because of the considerable cultural and individual variation of experiences. In keeping with the work of Celia Green, Jayne Gackenbach and Stephen LaBerge, a minimalist definition seems most appropriate as it highlights the profundity of formal self-reference in the dream: simply knowing that you are dreaming is a powerful discovery in itself. Which tasks are performed, thought considered, or objects focused upon after the initial recognition of self-situation is largely a matter of personal preference and psychological constitution and, of course, is nested within cultural frameworks. This variability includes having the verbal thought, "this is a dream," which is not a universal signature of lucidity, even though it makes for more convenient clinical lab results.[8] It may seem strange to make this argument for variability immediately after arguing for the *similarity* of lucid dream experiences across cultures and time, but as I hope to show, these two ideas are not mutually exclusive. There is an ultimate spectrum of possibility within which all these potentials play. Contrary to the popular slogan often suggested in the popular press, your imagination is not the only limit to what

is possible in lucid dreaming. These cognitive roads were laid down long ago.

Definitions and Descriptions

As a lucid dreamer myself, I also think it is appropriate to describe my own personal experience of lucid dreaming, drawing from my 2008 master's thesis.[9] My description is both phenomenological and a work in progress—a snapshot of a process not to be defended to the end of my days, but rather a reflection of my experience now. Caveats aside, lucid dreaming to me is an experience in which I come to know I am within a *dreaming landscape* where the boundaries of my self and the environment interpenetrate in a dynamic flux of interiority, shared resonance, and a mysterious "otherness." I may experience the thought, "I am dreaming," or may simply come to know it intuitively without using language thinking. Either way, lucidity is like being in a particular location that has a certain feel, a sense of place.[10] In this location known as "dreaming," autonomous events are mediated by my current psychological openness and resistance, which are in a constant state of fluctuation, moment by moment. Cognitively, I experience *lucidity* as mental clarity as well as meta-feeling and *meta-embodiment*—that is, an unusual awareness of my sense of self and my *dreambody*. Following M. Sheets Johnson, I define selfhood in dreams as "not of being alone in one's head but being alone in one's body, in particular, one's tactile-kinesthetic body."[11] Note that selfhood is not just the sense of "interiority" from which all phenomenal properties emanate. That aspect of self, known philosophically as perspectivity, is aptly described by Paul Tholey as the *ego core* in the lucid dream: "the origin of sight, the origin of will, of directing attention of thoughts and speech."[12] Tholey called this the "cyclopean eye," the witness of the visual field, the false homunculus. In contrast, a fuller selfhood is the ego core *in addition to* its identification with the current construction of the tactile-kinesthetic body—the dreambody—as well as its relationship to the dreaming environment.[13]

These are my biases and should be considered the basis for my own lucid dreaming worldview.[14] My own history of lucid dreaming research further reveals my biases, including my related work with ancestral dreams, nature meditation, sleep paralysis night-mares, and lucid dreaming as a heuristic tool for process-based archaeological inquiry.[15]

Now, let us move onward to an introduction and thematic breakdown for considering lucid dreaming as part of a larger spectrum of states of consciousness that are both autonomous and visionary.

The Autonomous Nature of Dream Imagery

Despite the constant yammering in the popular media that dreaming with knowledge that you are dreaming is "controlling your dreams," these two concepts are not the same. One can be lucid and not "in control" of either the dreambody or the dreaming environment, just as one can regularly shift and direct the dream's direction without this particular brand of formal self-reflection.[16] These abilities are correlated but not identical.[17] Because lucid dreaming is a culturally mediated phenomenon, there is no "correct" way to do it. Clearly, dream manipulation is a prized skill in widespread cultures and subcultures of lucid dreaming, ranging from Internet forums, to indigenous shamanic traditions, to Tibetan Buddhism, although the intent and the results of such dreaming are radically far-flung. I would say that the most essential "thing" one can consistently control in a lucid dream is the decision and ability to direct one's focus in the moment and sustain attention over time. Stephen LaBerge, who is often unfairly made the straw man for advocating complete and reckless dream control, no doubt due to his high esteem for cognitive freedom, actually suggested as early as 1985, "Control yourself, not your dreams."[18]

It is weirdly ironic that lucid dreaming is characterized chiefly as dream control, because lucid dreams are an excellent platform for experiencing novel and unexpected dream content. The eruption of spontaneous dream content is particularly closely associated with the lucid dreams of long-term meditators as well as adherents of *dream witnessing* traditions.[19] Of course, as I will review, many cultures around the world also rely on the autonomous aspects of lucid dreaming for the purpose of shamanic healing: gathering information, collecting power, and conducting healing ceremonies both within the dream and in response to a dream's counsel. In the 1980s, George Gillespie convincingly resurrected and applied the Jamesian tradition of introspection to his hypnagogic hallucinations and lucid dreams.[20] In addition, despite a long philosophical discussion of lucid dreaming in the Old Continent, American Ed Kellogg appears to be the first to have applied the phenomenological method, or *èpoché*, within the lucid dream.[21] This method

—which can truly be seen as a Western practice of meditation, much like Goethian science—allows for spontaneous imagery by design.[22] This line of research suggests something more than expectation is driving lucid dreaming outcomes. My MA thesis was inspired by Kellogg's methodology as well as by the research design of Fariba Bogzaran, in which she invited participants to incubate lucid dreams about the divine.[23] The collection of lucid dreams resulting from my self-study includes some of the most potent experiences in my life, waking or dreaming, and continues to be a source of contemplation and inspiration. Meanwhile, psychotherapist Mary Ziemer has been conducting a parallel personal experiment and has discussed *lucid surrender* as another Western tradition that is akin to dream witnessing, drawing inspiration from contemporary Sufism, medieval alchemy, and post-Jungian archetypal psychology.[24]

Additional support for the ability to mindfully interact with spontaneous dream imagery can be seen in the theories of cognitive psychologist Michele Stephen. Stephen suggests a dual memory model can account for the ability of consciousness to observe, in her words, the *autonomous imagination* as if were an external reality.[25] Her theory implies that witnessing is not merely a cultural value, but a neurological reality. Relatedly, lucid dreaming has something in common with all dreaming: it appears to be independent of the parts of the brain that govern visual perception in waking life. Kelly Bulkeley reviews the conclusion from neuropsychologist Mark Solms that "the human brain system has evolved with the capacity to generate autonomous visionary experiences whose visceral power and sensory intensity do not depend on external stimuli or volitional self-control."[26] Despite the current Western focus on dream manipulation and dream control for the pursuit of pleasure and happiness, a hidden but phenomenologically robust pattern of heightened dream spontaneity and emotional intensity in lucid dreaming has quietly been playing out throughout the millennia, across cultures.[27] These features are not necessarily the product of conscious expectation; they are for all intents and purposes *autonomous*. In this light, lucid dreaming is revealed as a process of give and take, question and answer, directed focus and dream revelation, so as to achieve whatever the aims are for the lucid dreamer.

The Visionary Capability

In a psycho-spiritual context, lucid dreams have visionary appeal. My lens

here is transpersonal psychology, which studies issues in nonordinary human consciousness and their effects on human development and culture, including both healthy and unhealthy manifestations. Self-awareness in the dream may be the defining feature of lucidity, but its visionary traits may represent its fullest potential for behavior change and social impact. Lucid dreams generally have greater mental clarity and perceptual acuity than "ordinary nonlucid" dreams.[28] While not all lucid dreams are considered "big dreams" or even "most memorable dreams"—in fact, like any state of consciousness, they can be subject to neurotic repetition and habitual cognitive processes, as my own dream journal woefully attests—lucid dreaming is a gateway to the numinous. As is well reported and celebrated, some have a strong positive affective tone that has been likened to ecstasy and bliss.[29]

Conversely, *lucid nightmares* can be terrifying and extraordinarily grotesque, even tapping into what religion scholar Rudoph Otto called *mysterium tremendum*—utter devastation and horror before the divine. Lucid nightmares have been unfortunately marginalized as a topic of inquiry, yet remain a key dimension to the spontaneous emergence of lucid dreaming, for some individuals more than others.[30] This suggests that lucid dreaming is linked with heightened emotionality in general, despite early assurances by scholars that "bad trips" were not known.[31] For example, lucid dreamer and blogger Erin Langley has noted how lucid dreaming can be destabilizing and come relentlessly during times of stress, such as during the 24/7 work of caring for a newborn baby, when vigilance and sleep mix in an unbalanced way.[32] I have also gone through intense periods of lucid dreaming due to parenting exhaustion, which should be included in the list of torturous ways to alter consciousness, right up there with being buried in a hill of ants. Nonetheless, these dreams made clear the specific anxieties of the day and brought insights about my new role and duties as a father, transforming my worldview along the way.

"By their fruits ye shall know them, not by their roots," William James writes of real visionary experience that has a lasting effect beyond the ordinary emotional ebb and flow of human experience. We forget so very much, but *exceptional human experiences*, such as powerful lucid dreams, stay with us for the lifespan, and may even permanently transform the personality structure.[33]

The visionary potential of lucid dreaming also relates to its dramatic

ability to integrate emotional and visual dream content, especially archetypal (more or less pan-human) content. Harry Hunt reports that long-term meditators have many lucid dreams consisting of "geometric mandala imagery, diffuse white light experiences, flying and floating, and encounters with mythological beings."[34] Similarly, transpersonal psychologist Fariba Bogzaran has delineated a cluster of experiences she calls *hyperspace lucid dreams*, which include nonrepresentational, multidimensional, and subtle energies.[35] We will explore this visionary imagery in greater detail later.

Lucid Dreaming in Transpersonal Psychology

Researchers are always organizing and reorganizing how states of consciousness relate to one another. Keep in mind that psychiatry still recognizes only three distinct states: deep sleep, dreaming sleep, and wakefulness. Everything else is considered unhealthily disordered or, grudgingly, anomalous. In contrast, in the tradition of transpersonal psychology, there are splitters and joiners in every corner. For example, Rhea White's proposed "exceptional human experiences" is a very broad category encompassing just about every altered state that does not include psychosis or permanent disassociation.[36] In the multidisciplinary field of dream studies, researchers have grouped powerful dreams in several ways and styles, such as apex dreams, extraordinary dreams, and transformative dreams.[37] The complex I am describing here is somewhat more tightly gathered in terms of attributes and outcomes but simultaneously more open in regard to its relationship to sleep events; I see this visionary autonomous zone[38] as a set of transitional states of meta-awareness (lucidity) that crosses the traditional boundary of sleep and wakefulness, and that includes distinctive visionary content and the potential for long-term impact.

With this ad hoc description in mind, it becomes apparent that some forms of lucid dreaming have less in common with ordinary dreams and are more in line with out-of-body experience, sleep paralysis visions, and the meditative trance states that are still largely uncategorized in terms of their physiology but that undoubtedly involve sleep mechanisms.[39] Not only are there many formal similarities among these states in terms of meta-cognition and "narrative" content, but they also are known to grade into one another

during a single session, suggesting a natural affinity or flow. I am certainly not the first to note this, but this perspective is often overlooked to the detriment of lucid dreaming research, especially as lucid dreaming enters a new chapter of neuroscientific exploration in which the excitement over technological breakthroughs is outshouting the need for good first-hand description, a lack of which renders the third-person data unreliable and possibly irrelevant. Physiologically, this "lucid complex" of states is associated with prefrontal cortex activation, rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, and "REM intrusion," although there is also evidence for seemingly lucid states in all stages of sleep. This chapter is mostly concerned with the phenomenological similarities of these lucid states, along with the implications of this grouping for cognitive psychology as well as the anthropology of consciousness and related fields. I will, however, include physiological and neurological perspectives when relevant, in an attempt to honor what Fariba Bogzaran and Daniel Delauriers call "integral dreaming" as well as to make sense of the possible evolutionary roots of this complex.[40]

This visionary autonomous complex stretches our usual thresholds of sleeping and waking, consciousness and unconsciousness, and dreaming and perceiving. Once we account for our cultural biases that sleep and wakefulness are binary—either off or on—new patterns of visionary awareness arise.[41] We can thank the anthropology of consciousness for this relative view. In the mid-20th century, one consequence of World War II—and in particular actions in the Pacific theater of war—was new public interest in other cultures (and especially shamanic cultures), which ultimately influenced the psychedelic movement and the growth of humanistic and transpersonal psychology. Notably, the popular works of anthropologists Carlos Castaneda and Kilton Stewart inspired a generation, eventually making way for the scientific validation of lucid dreaming. This opened up a "new" arena of possibility with an audience in waiting: consciousness during the sleep state, leading to a renewal in the study of dreams in general and contributing to the new science of consciousness.[42]

Lucid dreaming is the currently celebrated Golden Child of these related states that percolate through the lives of ordinary, healthy people. Some, like out-of-body experience, have recently become increasingly studied; others, such as sleep paralysis night-mares, are still not generally discussed in public due to their taboo content and an unfortunate and unjustified fear of their

pathological status.[43]

Questions of pathology and definitions of madness are necessarily a part of this discussion, as they are culturally defined and enforced, having real-world consequences. The general lack of acceptance of extraordinary experiences and vision states as "normal" in Western medicine continues to this day and is also projected onto other cultural systems, not always to their benefit.[44] Our ethnocentric concepts of reality are projected into the past as well, informing historical interpretation and archaeological theory. As someone with a background and deep interest in prehistory and ancient history, I have often shuddered at the simplistic assumptions made about how, for example, Paleolithic rock art is inspired, or how historic figures such as Plato or Jean de Arc came by their visions and "anomalous information." In short, because the upper potentials of lucid dreaming and related states are not understood—in terms of their visionary traits, their ability to be reliably called, or even the key feature of promoting contact with seemingly autonomous presences (for lack of a better word, *spirits*)—all too often extraordinary events are chalked up to myth, or if believed, seen as the work of psychopathology.

Modes and States of Consciousness

Anthropologist Michael Winkelman has usefully updated psychologist Charles Tart's designations for "altered states of consciousness" in a way that is sympathetic with modern neuropsychology.[45] His system consists of modes and states. *Modes* can be defined as biologically determined functional systems of the human brain; *states* of consciousness are more varied and represent actual styles of cognition on the ground, operating within the constraints of modes, and reflecting cultural influence as well as psychological needs and individual variation. What I particularly like about Winkelman's model of altered states is that it is sensitive to cultural variability; there is no one "pinnacle" state, but rather different states due to cultural norms that promote (or dampen) specific kinds of brain activity and correlated experience.[46] However, biological limits still ultimately influence cognitive possibilities; this is no blank slate theory of total cultural relativity, but rather a system that takes into account neurological bases for awareness

and their modulation by cultural norms.

In keeping with the discussion here about threshold states that bridge dreaming and waking cognition styles, Winkelman has added *integrative consciousness* to the big three modes that are currently recognized by psychiatry: waking, REM sleep (often called dreaming sleep), and non-REM sleep. REM dreaming is described as a mode (rather than a state) because we cannot refrain from dreaming; it is a biological given. Lucid dreaming can be seen as one (or more) state(s) of consciousness within the dream mode that can lead to *integrative consciousness*. Integrative consciousness in lucid dreaming can be described as a combination of waking awareness (volitional control, preordained tasks, ritual behavior) and dreaming cognition with its strongly emotional and visual style of presentation, producing "cognitive integration and therapeutic outcomes, reflecting a greater awareness of information-processing capacities of the unconscious."[47] Because of the ability to perform ritual actions that are preordained and intentional, dreaming is not just a mode but also a means to altering consciousness. Further, Winkelman suggests that lucid dreaming can exhibit traits of both shamanic and meditative states that make up integrative consciousness.[48] Based on these descriptions, one might even wonder if lucid dreaming can be seen as a value-neutral "platform" to engage *any* variety of higher-order cognition styles—that is, "You can do whatever you want." This parses well with postmodern conceptions of the mind, which posit schemas and cultural loading for much of the process of paradigm creation. Nevertheless, many lucid dreamers have claimed spontaneous non-dual states within sleep circumstances before even knowing such a thing was possible or even had a name, lending support to anthropologist David Hufford's *experiential source hypothesis*.[49] As the meditative aspects of lucid dreaming are already well recognized and discussed at length by many authorities, this chapter focuses more on the often-overlooked "shamanistic" aspects of lucid dreaming cognition, including dark emotions and titanic feelings of existential terror, and considers how they continue to crop up unbidden for some individuals, like it or not.

By *shamanistic*, I am referring to specific aspects of altered states of consciousness prized by shamanic healers the world over but not necessarily experienced by trained or recognized shamans. Many experts believe that shamanism—as a body of consciousness-altering techniques—is as old as

modern consciousness itself.[50] Using shamanic practices to elicit visionary experience is a virtual universal of human culture, and can seen most vividly in hunter-gather societies. Of course, religious institutions in complex societies also apply at least some of the classic methods of altering consciousness for the purpose of healing, gathering information, and communicating with "spirits." Shamanic cognition styles effectively produce spontaneous visual imagery that is symbolic and possibly non-linguistic in origin, making lucid dreaming a natural, and ancient, platform for promoting visionary experience.[51] As we shall see, one does not need be a shaman to get one's toes wet in this ancient well, but the shamanic aspects of lucid dreaming also brings a host of implications for its wholesale promotion.

States of Consciousness Similar to Lucid Dreaming

Lucid dreaming is just one of the many poetically hybrid or integrative forms of consciousness that can elicit the deep imagination and waking cognition styles simultaneously. The following section is a brief sweeping review of sister states, and should not be considered an in-depth analysis.

Out-of-Body Experience

While most out-of-body experiences (OBEs) are instigated from sleep or deep relaxation, they can be spontaneously generated as a result of life stresses such as shock, illness, and trauma. These experiences happen all over the world and their descriptions are similar across cultures. In New Age circles such an experience is known as *astral projection*, whereas in indigenous cultures the phenomenon generally translates to *soul flight*. OBEs are similar to lucid dreaming in that they occur with a "waking world" type of consciousness, with high levels of metacognition and volition. Imagery in OBEs can grade from precise replicas of one's environment to less accurate representations that are more similar to dream settings, sometimes in the same session. *Autoscopy*, seeing one's own body from a distance, is not always a feature of OBEs. Kinesthetic feelings go along with the sensation of

disidentifying with the somatic body, including dizzying feelings and rushing, tingling sensations. OBEs come with a mental clarity as sharp as waking-life thinking and lucid dreams.[52] People who experience OBEs and lucid dreams often differentiate the two experiences by an internal "feel" and a corresponding belief that the OBE environment is not malleable as in a lucid dream. Many scholars insist that this differentiation is a naïve realism reinforced by expectation; others have been documenting verified cases of OBEs resulting in verifiable information, such as during medically witnessed near-death experiences.[53]

Neurologically, OBEs have been suggested to be associated with REM intrusion into waking awareness as well as a disruption in the brain's temporal-parietal junction.[54] Provocatively, these theories have also been extended to near-death experience, as a stress-induced spontaneous episode of REM intrusion. This effect is polarizing: whereas materialist perspectives might see this correlation as a slam dunk against the claim of NDE experience as occurring after bodily death, believers may find support for ancient perspectives noting the similarity between dreams and the dying process. For example, the Tibetan Buddhist framework is that dharmas of sleep and dreams, which involve lucid dreaming practices, are at heart a preparation for death, including the movement of the soul after death.

Sleep Paralysis

Sleep paralysis (SP) is a conscious experience at the threshold of sleep that is usually described as the sensation of being held down or touched by an autonomous "presence," along with intense feelings of fear and anguish and bizarre bodily sensations. Often, absorbing hypnagogic visions accompany these sensations and include encounters with the storied *incubus* and *succubus* and any number of fantastical and terror-inducing creatures—as well as angelic beings, ancestors, and helpful entities.[55] Such an experience is also marked by a focused, and often incredulous, waking cognition style (often with no break of awareness while falling asleep) that leaves people certain they did not experience a dream but something "realer than real." Sleep paralysis visions—I prefer the term "vision" as the cultural baggage of "hallucination" implies unhealthiness and meaninglessness—can also have a

strong sexually tone for some, including orgasmic levels of pleasure that sometimes mix simultaneously with the feelings of dread and disgust.[56]

Physiologically, sleep paralysis accompanies REM intrusion into sleep onset (and is more common when waking up from sleep); the state is apparently triggered by a continuity of the cholinergic reticular-activating system in the brain stem that usually functions to prevent us from physically carrying out actions occurring in dreams.[57] In the case of SP, the sleeper has awoken but the REM state is temporarily extended, allowing for the sleeper to project her dreams onto the waking environment, often with open eyes. Many sleep paralysis experiences begin as realistic portrayals of the immediate environment but then grade into nightmarish lucid dreams, although the dreamer may not notice this transition. Although disturbing, SP is generally harmless from a biological standpoint. However, narcolepsy patients have a harder time, as do sufferers of repetitive isolated SP. In these cases, SP is considered a sleep symptom of a larger health issue.

Sleep paralysis sensations are also well known in the lucid dreaming community as an opportunity to have an out-of-body experience, if that is the intent. I often describe sleep paralysis as "getting stuck in the threshold" between the waking world and the dreamworld.

Hypnagogic Hallucinations and Abstract Geometrics

Hypnagogia can be experienced without sleep paralysis; often the visions are fleeting images, such as wispy lights, or a sudden image, such as a stranger's face or a teddy bear. Occasional fully articulated dream scenes do manifest, but they tend to be disconnected, usually consisting of a single image or moment, rather than a long narrative plot as we see in REM-style dreaming. Spiders and insects (seen, heard, and felt) are among the more common negative-toned hallucinations. Common sounds include hearing one's name called, fierce winds, or, in modern times, electronic sounds. One's psychological set and expectation clearly can play a role in the manifestation of the imagery. Some people hear beautiful music in hypnagogia; others experience orgasmic states.

Hypnagogia can also include abstract geometric imagery that can be seen with eyes closed or that is overlaid with waking reality.[58] I bring special attention to the geometrics because the typical representational imagery of lucid dreams can also easily fade into mandalas, three-dimensional tunnels of light, and other abstract geometric forms without a break in consciousness or a period of waking up. Besides Hunt's "archetypal" imagery and Bogzaran's "hyperspace," other researchers who delve into nonrepresentational geometric patterns and light in dreams include George Gillespie, who describes 16 kinds of light experiences in his own lucid dreams, as well as Scott Sparrow and Ken Kelzer; all of these authors attribute spiritual significance to some experiences of abstract imagery.[59] In contrast to this phenomenally informed research, some visual psychologists believe these experiences are more of a "surface phenomenon," determined by the structure of the optic nerve and associated brain centers. Abstract geometric imagery, known in visual psychology as *visual dynamics* and in cognitive anthropology as *entoptic imagery*, is similarly described in cannabis-, mescal-, and LSD-induced visions as well as in hallucinations from migraine and sensory deprivation sessions.[60] The affective dimension of these visual experiences is also noted in many of these studies; the experiences tend to convey a deep sense of felt meaning.

Anthropologist David Luke notes that there remain many unquestioned assumptions about so-called entoptic phenomena, including the lack of evidence for their generation in the optic nerve and the overlooking of their association with "paranormal acquisition of information."[61] Entoptic imagery has become a touchstone that is slowing down research in many disciplines not accustomed to the necessity of nuanced first-hand reports or tackling the philosophical questions that these phenomena elicit, both of which naturally challenge the biases of materialistic reductionism in scientific culture.

False Awakenings

False awakenings are seemingly ordinary dreams that tend to occur when the dreamer is expecting to wake up. In false awakenings, dreamers often go through their normal morning rituals, often not realizing that they are actually dreaming until bizarre elements surface in the dream. In the lucid dreaming

literature, false awakenings are typically called “pre-lucid,” as dreamers may question reality but do not necessarily make the leap in metacognition to formal self-reference—that is, “I am dreaming.”[62] I believe that this classification is too assumptive, overlaying the phenomenon with an expectation for Western-style lucidity that does not need occur. False awakenings are not failed lucid dreams, in other words. Rather, we can see false awakenings as exhibiting some of the traits of lucid dreaming, chiefly the waking-world cognition style—clear thinking, goal-oriented decision making, lots of internal processing—along with very stable and perceptually clear dream scenes. Generally, these experiences occur in the early morning, just like lucid dreams and big dreams in general, when subcortical brain activity tied to the circadian cycle increases.[63] When false awakenings are allowed their own ontology, we can begin to see how lucid dreaming is itself a cultural construct built upon a dreaming cognition style that is naturally part of the sleep-wake cycle.

Highway Hypnosis

The phenomenon known as highway hypnosis is probably under-reported but has been noted recently as a cause of hallucinations that usually occur among drivers of automobiles or trucks, usually at night, after driving for a long time.[64] Typically, drivers describe seeing apparitions of people or otherworldly creatures on the side of the road or in the road itself. Some drivers have reported pulling over and picking up a hitchhiker who then proceeds to disappear once in the car: “the disappearing hitchhiker.”[65] In England, certain regions and even particular intersections are renowned for being associated with particular apparitions, such as a little girl in a white gown, a procession of many people dressed in old-fashioned clothes, or mythological animals such as werewolves or huge black dogs.[66]

Researchers H. Furuya, et al. suggest that road hypnosis hallucinations occur during REM intrusion into wakefulness, due to the hypnotic effect of driving at night.[67] In these cases, it may be that the need for REM is so strongly governed by circadian rhythms that it occurs during its usual time. This spontaneous vision state may be most likely to occur in individuals who are already suffering from REM sleep deprivation. Paul Devereux suggests

highway hypnosis as one of many environmental hallucination triggers for those who are "suitably neurophysically 'primed,' for whatever reason."[68]

Archetypal Dreams

Briefly, archetypal dreams are highly memorable dreams that include content such as geometric mandala imagery, diffuse white light experiences, flying and floating sensations, and encounters with mythological beings.[69] These dreams are called archetypal because the content is not easily associated with a dreamer's waking life and preoccupations, but rather can be called "pan-human" or universally recognized. Often, the imagery is accompanied by strongly evocative emotional states, such as awe, fascination, fear and terror, and the sensed presence of an "Other." Sometimes, these dreams shift into experiences of non-duality, in that dreamers feel they are not viewing imagery but rather the self is defined by or circumscribed by the imagery as it expresses itself.

Carl Jung is famously known for his archetypal dreams of this nature, and it is important to notice that he never describes them as having formal self-awareness, although he clearly describes strong metacognition while these events continue. The imagery is autonomous and self-generative, and can include representational images as well as geometric forms comingling with one another. Harry Hunt notes that archetypal dreams may involve brain mechanisms that are nonlinguistic in origin, which could explain why they are not as plumable as ordinary dreams in terms of free association interpretations. He suggests, "These are more abstract levels of imagistic self-reference, based on structurally complex visual-kinesthetic synesthesias, with visual structures predominating. It is exceedingly difficult to see how such dreams could be based on the Freud/Foulkes model of translation from verbal-propositional thinking."[70] Instead of the narrative-based dream drama of ordinary dreams, "The dream becomes something more like a vision—an autonomous exercise of intuitive imagination."[71]

Neuroscientist John Antrobus similarly describes "superdreams" involving strong emotionality that tend to come in the early morning, perhaps due to the warming of the brain from long REM sessions. Antrobus suggests, "Core body temperature rises gradually from its nadir in the middle of the

night during slow-wave sleep, the least active brain state. As morning nears, subcortical brain activity tied to the circadian cycle increases. When these cycles coincide in the last and longest REM phase, the study found, the mind produces its most dramatic dreams."[72]

Here we have another overlapping set of extraordinary dream experiences that essentially comingle dreaming and waking cognition styles, yet they are more than the sum of their parts: they are truly *integrative*. Lucidity in archetypal dreams may not include formal self-reference statements like "This is a dream," although this may reflect both cultural assumptions about dreams in general and the intent of the dreamer in particular.

Visitations

Visitation dreams and visions feature emotional and realistic meetings with individuals who have passed on, including known relatives, known historical figures, and unidentifiable figures of all stripes. The exchange can happen in dreams, in which case the sense of presence and clarity of consciousness is described as realistic and similar to waking cognition styles. During sleep paralysis visions and hypnagogic visions, which are truly "waking dreams," the exchange occurs when the figure approaches the sleeper's bed, in effect initiating the exchange.[73] Some anthropologists have even described their own visitations during fieldwork as occurring when awake and vertical (not just when lying down on the edge of sleep).[74] Visitations also come from rituals and stress-inducing behaviors such as sweat lodges, chanting, and drumming.

According to consciousness studies scholar Kevin Kovelant, visitation dreams often have these features:

- The dream feels more real than the usual dream: it has more clarity, focus, and steadiness of mind.
- A "felt sense" that the person is really the identified individual, not just a memory.
- Very little plot: usually the dream narrative consists of the interaction between the dream ego and the figure of the deceased person.

- Strong emotions are commonly reported: love, forgiveness, anger, and fear.
- A "physical" touch between the spirit and the dreamer, usually a hug or a reaching out.
- The deceased dream figure (if known) often looks younger and healthier than when he or she passed on.
- Sometimes accompanied by the feeling of "weight" or "presence" on the dreamer's bed.[75]

Finally, visitation experiences are anecdotally correlated with information transfer that is later verified. For example, Kovelant relates the following documented story: "In 1925, a North Carolina man awoke from a dream in which his late father—looking very much alive—instructed him to 'find my will in my overcoat pocket.' Checking the pocket, the dreamer discovered a note leading him to a certain chapter in the family Bible. Between two pages in that chapter, the will was cached, according to 1927 *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*."[76]

Clearly, visitations have phenomenological attributes linking them to hypnagogia and, sometimes, sleep paralysis. However, the only neurological theories aimed at this subset of extraordinary experiences are largely taking aim at bigger fish, such as the ontological reality of spirits or life after death.[77]

Meditation and Trance

Lucid dreaming is practiced as meditation in many schools of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Transcendental Meditation. Consequently, researchers in neurophenomenology have correlated these subjective experiences with physiological markers, concluding that lucid dreaming can closely resemble a spontaneous meditative state.[78] In fact, both Jim Pagel and Eleanor Rosch discuss this issue at length in this anthology. The attributes of meditation also can bleed into lucid dreaming events in a single session; as Harry Hunt as reported, long-term meditators in the sleep lab have said upon awakening that they do not know if they were meditating or dreaming.[79] The primary

experience in deep meditative states, in both dreams and waking, is the dawning of non-dual consciousness, in which the subject/object duality of normal reality dissolves. Non-duality can take two main forms: a unitive consciousness, in which there is an expansion of identity into the world (or vice versa), or a void-like consciousness, during which all objects of awareness and even space/time itself disappears.[80] I have personally experienced non-duality only once in my life; it was a spontaneous episode of unitive consciousness that occurred in the middle of the night upon awakening. I cannot describe it well. All I can say is that "I" disappeared and was awash with a larger awareness that I can only describe as "radiant pure love."

Deep meditative states can also be produced by overwhelming the senses rather than depriving them. Trance induction from singing, chanting, and drumming leads to emotional frenzy and sudden physical collapse, bringing on a hybrid state of awareness that involves vivid extraordinary experience. There is a great diversity of these states across cultural groups, though they are largely predicted by their cultural mode of production (such as hunter/gather versus agricultural).[81] Notably, archaeologist David Whitley has outlined the most common bodily metaphors depicted in prehistoric rock art in North America that are ethnographically known to have been generated from trance states. These metaphors are strikingly similar to the strong affective and visual symbolic forms often outlined in lucid dreaming and archetypal dreams—sexual ecstasy, killing/bodily death, moving through vortices, abstract geometric forms, and bodily transformation into half-human/half animal creatures (therianthropy).[82] In this anthology, Diana Riboli provides fresh examples of animal transformation in shamanic lucid dreaming.

Entheogens

As early as 1969, Charles Tart suggested lucid dreams can recreate the experience of many psychedelic drugs.[83] Hallucinogenic drug states are, of course, well-known portals to visionary worlds, consisting of high levels of metacognition while interacting with a fluid, sensual world populated by autonomous entities, paradoxical self-constructs, vivid perceptions, and

strong emotional states. In both lucid dreaming and sessions with ayahuasca (a plant-based DMT concoction) as well as other tryptamine-based substances (such as mushrooms in the genus *Psilocybe*), the visionary feels lucidly self-aware while navigating a strange and numinous world on the edge of wakefulness and sleep. Shamanic practitioners who ingest ayahuasca suggest that communication with plants actually results in novel botanical information and recipes for healing, a claim that is also made with lucid dreaming and vision quest journeys.[84]

Frank Echenhofer, a professor of clinical psychology at the California Institute of Integral Studies, recently collaborated with noted ayahuasca researcher Luis Eduardo Luna to research the electrical output of the brain while under the influence of an ayahuasca brew. The pair discovered a strong synchrony in the frontal lobe over multiple frequency bands, specifically the high beta and gamma range. A similar range of effects, in the same regions of the brain, was found recently by two separate lucid dream research teams.[85]

Psychoactive mushrooms also are known to bring sleep and vivid dreams when they are consumed in low doses, classifying them technically as *oneirogens*. Another oneirogen recently linked with lucid dreaming practices is *Salvia divinorum*, which in low doses stimulates vivid hypnopompic-like visions. In higher doses, the drug instigates strong depersonalization effects and non-duality that can involve the certainty of being in contact with autonomous entities (and varyingly interpreted as spirits or aliens).[86]

Lucid Nightmares: A Misunderstood Aspect of Metacognition in Dreams

Lucid nightmares are dreams marked with both the self-awareness levels of lucid dreaming and the classical features of a spontaneous nightmare, including waking up directly from the dream.[87] In my mind, lucid nightmares act as an existential bridge that connects lucid dreaming to other altered states that are not currently in favor in Western psycho-spirituality, yet have an ancient and pan-human expression. The elements of a lucid nightmare are similar to those identified in psychiatrist Gordon Halliday's description of a classic nightmare. These include the nightmare's uncontrollability, its

perceived sense of reality, the dreadful or anxiety-producing story line, and the nightmare's believed importance.[88] However, understanding that "This is just a dream" during the lucid nightmare does not necessarily dispel the strong emotional state or the presentation of disturbing imagery. This suggests a role for underlying cognitive structures that are not always disturbed by the "power" of meta-awareness, or processes that may be too complex to be dissolved or worked through within a single dream (if, indeed, that is the psychological function of these experiences).

Frederik van Eeden may have been the first to classify strongly negative lucid dreams with his "demon dreams," which he noted often followed his lucid-control dreams.[89] Almost a century later, Jayne Gackenbach wrote about the potential of negative experiences, suggesting, "after the novelty fades, the consciousness remains, but it's no longer unique and novel and fun. Sometimes it's not nice."[90] In 1991, Scott Sparrow described his own harrowing experiences with lucidity in a warning against the wholesale advertising of lucid dreaming to the public until more was known about its basic psychodynamics.[91]

The phenomenology of lucid nightmares is ambiguous and not well developed, so the following description of their characteristics is only preliminary (Box 14.1). First, lucid nightmares resist modification by the dreamer, although there may be attempts to do so. The dreams often include dream figures who may look threatening, demonic, undead, or in a perceived state of suffering or intense emotionality. These dream figures also attempt to interact with the dream ego and appear to have their own motivations, autonomy, and intelligence. Other inescapable confrontations include titanic forces of nature, images of death and decay, mutant creatures and monsters, fire and other hellish scenery, sickly lighting and shadows, and other forms of putrescence and pestilence. Physical pain is realistically felt, including wounds, energetic shocks, burning sensations, piercing, mutilation, and even destruction of the dream body. Lastly, similar to spontaneous nightmares, fear is not the only significant negative emotion in lucid nightmares.[92] The full emotional range is possible, including anger, grief, anxiety, confusion and terror. A possible subset of the lucid nightmare may be experiences marked by multiple layers of emotionality and detachment, similar to witnessing dreams but with a specific focus on negative or disturbing imagery.[93] Lucid nightmares seem to have a wide spectrum of after-effects,

from feelings of peace and harmony to bewilderment, continued fear and emotional sensitivity, catharsis, and feelings of renewal.[94]

Box 14.1 Preliminary Characteristics of the Lucid Nightmare

1. Confrontation of *images of titanic forces and death and decay*, human skeletal remains, mutant creatures and monsters, fire and powerful natural forces such as tidal waves, nuclear explosions, and earthquakes, and general putrescence and pestilence.
2. *Autonomous dream characters* who appear to be undead, angry, violent, intelligent and "tricky," or in a state of pain or suffering.
3. *Lack of control* in terms of setting—imagery is stable and self-generating.
4. *Physical pain* in the form of gun wounds, energetic shocks, bodily burning, piercing of the dreambody by sharp objects, ritual cutting, and so on.
5. *Full emotional range* is possible, including anger and rage, sadness and deep grief, anxiety, fear, and terror. However, a level of detachment and clarity can simultaneously mark some experiences, similar to witnessing dreams.
6. Awakening directly from the dream, thus disturbing sleep and deserving of the primary definition as a *nightmare*.

Similar to my analysis of false awakenings, lucid nightmares do not need to be seen as "failed lucid dreams" or "missed opportunities" because the dreamer's awareness does not necessarily effect change in the dream landscape; this may be a presumption based on ethnocentric definitions of lucidity involving dream control, biases derived from simplistic misapplications of humanistic psychology that do not respect the ontologically primary nature of terror and the sublime. The emotional timbre of lucid nightmares crosses the threshold of sleep into waking life and can linger in the body for hours or even days. At first glance, the taboo against recognizing lucid nightmares (except as a failed lucid dream) is surprising, given the frequent observation that anxiety and fear in dreams often lead to

spontaneous lucidity.[95] Indeed, 18th- and 19th-century accounts of lucid dreaming noted the likelihood of noticing one is dreaming due to terrorizing dreams, allowing the dreamer to wake up.[96]

From a cognitive psychological perspective, if you are fully lucid, you should know you cannot be hurt. Stephen LaBerge writes that fear in the lucid dream is a reflection of "marginal lucidity,"[97] suggesting that the fear and lucidity are at odds. This is an interesting philosophical supposition, one that I admittedly remain ambivalent about to this day despite the comfort it promotes in the moment that "this is not real." On one hand, I have had great success facing my fears in lucid dreams. But on the other, I sometimes have encountered intense imagery that was simply stronger than my wish to "reconcile" or "integrate" with it. Perhaps my ambivalence is part of the problem?

Maybe not. Gordon Halliday suggests from clinical experience that, in some cases, prescribed lucidity can actually make nightmares worse.[98] In her chapter in this anthology, Gestalt psychologist Brigitte Holzinger also suggests caution (and finding social support) when facing some lucid nightmares. A self-study of my own lucid dreams for a period of 2.5 years, before and after I joined a supportive dream community in 2004, also revealed clear transformational trends in my emotional states: my "before" dreams contain more themes of rejection and defensiveness, and my "after" dreams were marked by themes of support, surrender and trust.[99] So community support may play an important role in the success of confrontational approaches in lucid nightmares. What is at issue here is not the contention that facing scary situations in dreams can be healing and good for ego development, but rather the supposition that lucidity automatically trumps disturbing dream content, and under which conditions? If we grant that lucid dreaming may be powerful enough to heal, then we must also admit that it may also be powerful enough to do us harm. Otherwise, lucid dreaming is not really the medicine so many claim it could be.

Here is an example of one of my own lucid nightmares. I chose this one first because it shows how ambiguous the line between a lucid dream and a nightmare can be, in terms of classification.

Into the Tornado

I'm in the kitchen [of my childhood home] and someone points out to me how the lamp hanging from the ceiling is swaying. "It's an earthquake!" I say, and we feel a deep rumble and

then a shaking—I look out the window and can see the earth rolling like waves. I run into the living room where it is open and a big bookcase falls over . . . [My friends] are by the front wall and suddenly the roof over their heads is gone and a brilliant white/yellow light is spilling in with some torrential rushing noise—"It's a tornado and I am dreaming," I think. That side of the room is not visible now in the painfully bright light and I say out loud, "Take me!" I am scared and not sure if this is a good idea—such intensity. The light gets brighter, washing out the scene, and then I see [or realize] that my eyes are open and I'm staring widely, my body tense and shaking a little.[100]

Note that my own fear is not the only intense experience in the dream; there is a separate unfolding of the titanic energy of the tornado that causes physical pain. This dream is actually part of a lifelong series of dreams about tornados that began in my early childhood and continues today. Through the repetition of a pattern of dreams, we can discern more than a single dream alone.[101]

Lucid dreams and nightmares have formal similarities that naturally lead to a blending of their features. As psychologist Harry Hunt argues, both lucid dreams and nightmares have vivid imagery, intense emotional enhancement, and more tactile-kinesthetic description than ordinary dreams. Both can disturb sleep by leading directly to awakening. Nightmare reports have more metacognition than ordinary dreams, in the form of dreams-within-dreams, false awakenings, and self-questioning, even if formal self-reference is not achieved.[102] As I have suggested, understanding that "This is just a dream" during the lucid nightmare does not necessarily dispel the strong emotional state or shift the presentation of disturbing imagery. Sometimes, it seems as if we are invited to watch it all bubble up.

Here is another example of one of my lucid nightmares, another tornado dream occurring three years after the previous one:

Trying to Face the Tornado

I'm outside and I hear the tornado as it goes by. There is a sound like a few pigs, or other animal sounds. The tornado is more like a dense black cloud, not a funnel, but racing along the ground. I realize I'm dreaming and I decide to face the tornado . . . the tornado is going by in the distance and when I intend to face it, I see that it is now a herd of animals that immediately turn toward me, rushing headlong, dust rising. I brace myself. The animals are like buffalos with big horns, like yaks. I dodge them as they approach and then a group of humanoid figures advance—they are pasty white with sunken eyes, hairless, looking like zombies or aliens. They paw at me, [there are] too many of them and I am overwhelmed and wake up, disturbed, heart racing.[103]

In this dream, the titanic energy that is being confronted transforms twice,

from tornado to animal stampede, and then to an army of aliens/zombies. Despite becoming more human-like as the dream progresses, it remains overwhelming in the end. This is clearly a work-in-progress. Luckily, repetitive nightmares come back to give us more opportunities to deal with them.

Potential Markers for Lucid Nightmares

Why are some people more prone to lucid nightmares than others? From a cognitive anthropological standpoint, these occurrences may be due to the existence of hidden paradigms of reality that allow for the reality of spirits, or the granting of dreams as ontologically primary, rather than an "illusion" or reflection of waking life experience. These paradigms may surface only when individuals, or social groups, encounter distress or ambiguity, similar to how ghost stories are more effective if told around a campfire in the middle of an unfamiliar forest. I have certainly noticed this in regard to sleep paralysis nightmares, in which some dreamers are still terrorized despite comforting themselves that "This is a normal biological effect," often due to conflicting core religious or folk beliefs.[104] Similarly, in her study of Hmong refugees, anthropologist Shelley Adler noticed that those who were more at risk of sleep paralysis nightmares were also those suffering from religious conflicts.[105] Researchers from the University of Waterloo also found that people who held supernatural beliefs about sleep paralysis experiences had greater levels of distress afterwards.[106] Lohmann and Dahl's chapter in Volume 2 of this collection further showcases the conflicting paradigms of reality held by modern lucid dreamers. Perhaps when we are in between paradigms, the terror can slip in between the cracks.

There are also psychological markers for lucid nightmares that can be drawn from the personality work-ups of both nightmare sufferers and lucid dreamers. These markers are not necessarily involved with mental illness, which is a commonly cited predictor in the anthropology of consciousness for inducing visions and "crossing thresholds" type states of consciousness (i.e., the "shaman's disease").[107]

As Hunt suggests, lucid dreams and nightmares have more in common than is typically stated; they verge on wakefulness, have the potential for more intense emotionality than ordinary dreams, and feature an enhancement

of kinesthetic sensation.[108] In *The Nightmare*, Ernest Hartmann notes that people with frequent nightmares are "unusually open and undefended in their mental structure, with a tendency both to mental illness (schizophrenia) and to artistic expression."[109] Hartmann calls this trait vulnerability or *thin boundaries*, which he defines as "an ability to experience the world more directly, more painfully than others."[110] It is important to add that this vulnerability can be unhealthy, having been linked to higher rates of psychological issues in sufferers' families of origin.

Spontaneous lucid dreams and having thin boundaries are correlated as well; not surprisingly, lucid dreaming is also linked with creative and artistic traits. Many lucid dreamers are imaginative people who are prone to fantasy.[111] Openness is inherently risky. A 2011 study published in *Consciousness and Cognition* found that students who had more lucid dreams than their peers also performed better on the Iowa Gambling Task, a test that measures emotional-based decision making in unknown situations.[112] A 2009 multivariate analysis suggests that spontaneous lucid dreamers tend toward greater independence and self-responsibility than nonlucid dreamers. This same study also reiterated classic pronouncements made in the early days of lucid dreaming research that lucid dreamers tend to rate more highly in terms of life satisfaction, authority, and emotional endurance compared to nonlucid dreamers.[113] Lastly, let us not forget that higher levels of vigilance and bodily stress, coupled with sleep restriction, can promote lucid dreams as well as other threshold states. With these correlations in mind, self-awareness in the dreamworld emerges as a double-edged sword that may bring insight and life empowerment, but, for some, a greater openness to suffering. This paradoxical intensity is no doubt why many indigenous societies and contemplative traditions that incorporate lucid dreaming practices take care to provide brave and risk-taking vision-questers and meditators with a "secure container" of elders as well as time to integrate the experiences.

Here is another of my lucid nightmares—showcasing how awakening can come from pain as well as emotional sources.

Hag Attack

A woman approaches me deliberately and quickly. She is older [than me], wearing a dark cloak, brunette. As I look at her, her face instantly ages and a look of anger/horror/condemnation overtakes her, open mouth, bulging eyes. She directs a psychic blow to me—I am hit by a paralyzing force and am racked by intense pain, as if all of my body

is burning. I wake up terrified and alert.[114]

Alternative Concepts for the Lucid Nightmare

We need not only view lucid nightmares through the lens of healing and psychological development. Similar narrative motifs can be found in initiation dreams and visions, which also involve the themes of facing death, sacrifice, mutilation, and rebirth while the experiencer takes the attitude of surrender or the role of witness.[115] As I have already noted, David Whitney's bodily trance metaphors are quite similar, not only in their themes of fighting against overwhelming forces, but also in their feelings of pain and the threat of (dream) ego death. This is not the same as seeking out experiences to destroy the dreambody, as Paul Tholey has done in his lucid dreams.[116] (Cliffnotes: Get lucid and head down the basement stairs.) I have done this as well, and have found the experience to be courage building and clarifying, although it is definitely an acquired taste and not for everyone. The difference is that these spontaneous initiatory experiences come to us, and not in a form we would choose or anticipate. Finally, frightening near-death experiences have comparable characteristics to lucid nightmares, including self-awareness, autonomously generated imagery and disturbing experiences, and a confusing emotional mixture of terror and detachment.[117]

I believe that the status of the lucid nightmare has been somewhat resisted due to biases that consider a lucid nightmare a "failed" lucid dream due to the dreamer's inability to be in control. In this standard paradigm of Western ego psychology, the nightmare is usually discussed as a reflection of the dreamer's own fear. By banishing fear, it is thought, we banish unsightly imagery. This seems to be a weak way of applying awareness to naturally arising experiences. Lucid dream researcher Jayne Gackenbach makes a relevant point here, warning that dream awareness has the power to lead us to new truths, but also can function as a defense *against* awareness.[118] By automatically attempting to transform our nightmares, we are suggesting that we have nothing to learn from the experience as it presents itself. While this "conquer and overpower" approach has proved fruitful with trauma sufferers, a bias in humanistic psychology and psychiatry in general remains that disturbing dreams in healthy individuals "should" be converted into positive experiences if given the opportunity. Patrick McNamara writes, "most investigators and most sufferers/patients view nightmares as things to be

eliminated—as unmitigated evils. The distress caused by nightmares is an evil or at least a serious clinical problem. But, to diminish the distress associated with nightmares, we need to know more about the immediate sources of the distress."[119] Paraphrasing Scott Sparrow, sometimes fear is not a failure, but the recognition of a worthy adversary, and perhaps an invitation to deeper participation.[120]

I also suspect that lucid nightmares are under-reported in the literature, most likely due to hesitance by optimistic lucid dreaming researchers who found themselves in the awkward position of having to not only describe the lucid dream state but also "sell" it to skeptical scientific—and cynical psychoanalytic—communities. Larger cultural biases in the understanding of spiritual experience also play a role in the taboos assigned to "the dark side" of lucid dreaming. Psychologist Bill Plotkin has suggested that Western cultures of spirituality emphasize "ascent" into non-duality, but largely reject the parallel processes that come with this: descent into the body, emotions, and our drives for purification.[121] In this light—so to speak, as we should not forget that "lucidity" is a term of illumination—Scott Sparrow has noted our culture's love affair with light and oneness may come at the expense of understanding what he calls the *transformational* path, which involves delving into emotions and initiation-style experiences that parallel Tantra and the almost forgotten Western culture of alchemy.[122]

Given the full range of ecstatic and stressful potentials of lucid dreaming, in combination with their catalyzing nature for self-understanding, existential reckoning, and possibly the establishment of new self-constructs, they fit in well with psychologist David Lukoff's *visionary spiritual experience* and Stanislav and Christina Grof's *spiritual emergence*.[123] Whatever you call them, these extraordinary experiences come at periods of stress during crossroads in life—and, of course, can also be triggered at these crossroads most easily through the classical techniques of ecstasy. James Hillman called dreams "the underworld," referring to the realm where we contact dark emotions and the existential truths of death and decay.[124] Lucidity can banish shadows, yet also creates them. The parallels to frightening near-death experiences (fNDEs) here are particularly striking—not only their formal phenomenological properties, but also the taboos around sharing them due to shame and the perceived judgment of somehow "failing." Scholar Chris Bache has suggested that the fNDE is not a moral failure of the individual,

but rather a purifying fire that may be required for spiritual unfolding. Hellish experiences are not punishment, but authentically about suffering. Bache suggests that fNDEs may be healing in themselves, with possibilities for our collective humanity, or what he refers to as "species-mind."[125] I believe there is similar potential for the slow digestion of lucid nightmares over a lifetime, in particular when we are forced to sit with existential truths and forces that cannot be resolved simply by the brave act of facing them, talking with them calmly, or absorbing their otherness into our egoic dreambodies. Sometimes more is required than courage and the ability to transform dream imagery; sometimes the willingness to *be* transformed is essential.

Conversely, the assumption that moving toward reconciliation in lucid nightmares—as opposed to killing and fighting—is always for the best also has a humanistic and ethnocentric bias that has been in favor ever since the Senoi theory was discredited. Sometimes we still need to fight! Anthropologist Fernando Santos-Granero, referencing the oft-reprinted text of Paul Tholey's tiger dream, which turns into his father when confronted, notes, "in the West 'we' do not kill our fathers, not even in dreams."[126] As we move through life, core existential issues will continue to self-arise, and we can expect to see in lucid dreaming and other apex moments a continuous evolution (including de-evolution and revolution) regarding how these themes are addressed.

Here is a fourth lucid nightmare of mine, involving the repetitive theme once more of facing the tornado. This dream came about a year and a half after the previous tornado dream.

A Storm Is Coming

I'm in a house with my wife and [friend]. A tornado is coming. I look out the window and it's coming straight for us. The house lurches on impact and we all run into another room. I look out another window and see the tornado [between] a crack in the curtains. I realize it's coming for me. I say, "I will meet you!" [and am now fully lucid]. Immediately the tornado shifts and I see a woman's face [within the funnel], and it transforms into a beautiful young woman in soot-colored clothes. I am shocked and delighted—I take her by the hand and invite her inside the house. She has some old make-up caked on, too white on her face, with eyeliner that makes dark bags under her eyes. She has brown hair, long and straight, and is disheveled. I kiss her hand and thank her for seeing me. I ask her, "What is your name?"

She replies, "Domesta." I repeat it to be sure I remember. I ask her why she has that name [she appears to be a nature spirit but I recognized her name as a root for "household" in Latin] and she says, "A storm is coming."

I then ask her what can I do for her, and she replies, "Have courage." She turns to leave and then says to me excitedly, "See you tomorrow!"

"What?" I say. This fills me with dread and I wake up.[127]

In this dream, the titanic force is anthropomorphized into a communicative young woman with a disheveled look, a wearied Cinderella. Her message is clear, yet still alarming enough to jolt me awake. The intensity of the dread was extraordinary, like a bomb going off in my belly that stuck with me somatically for several days.

I presented these three tornado dreams in particular because no dream is truly a singular event. Although we love to showcase "instant healing," more common in nightmares are repetitive themes wrought over time, confronted again and again, sometimes with greater competency—which can be defined only in the moment—and sometimes not. In some cases, the immensity of the archetypal force being confronted may overpower the dreamer, but the dreamer still may learn how best to cope with these unstoppable forces over a lifetime. The dream series has much more to say, of course, on many levels, but that is not central to this discussion.

Lucid Dreaming and the Autonomous Visionary Capacity

Despite the pioneering work of cognitive anthropologists and transpersonal psychologists—and their related cultural artifacts such as prehistoric rock art—shamanistic visions tend to be treated as products of mental illness and disordered thinking in general. A full-spectrum look at lucid dreams and its brethren, which can exhibit the titanic emotionality of shamanic consciousness as well as the abstract clarity of meditative awareness, therefore suggests that pathology and personality disorders are only part of the causes of visions, and that impactful visions can come easily if the conditions are right.[128] Recently, David Whitley's *Cave Paintings and the Human Spirit* helpfully expanded the concept of "the shaman's disease" into "the shaman's diseases" by adding lesser personality disorders and mental illnesses to the usual mix of hereditary schizophrenic disorders.[129] Drug-induced states of consciousness are another consistent assumption for default entry into the visionary worlds. Although valid in general, this point is typically made without any mention of the potential for big dreams or non-

drug-induced shamanic techniques for altering consciousness.[130] One goal of this chapter is to follow Whitley's lead and review the many conditions that promote sleep disturbance, as well as the personality correlates to big dreams (advanced lucid dreaming and its ilk) and the shamanic temperament.

In hopes of promoting the inclusion of lucid dreaming as a visionary state that can be spontaneous as well as reliably called, I will now briefly review the triggers and tendencies that promote shamanic consciousness in general, with a focus on lucid dreaming and its related states.

Internal Factors for Calling Visions and Big Dreams

1. *Psychological disposition and illness*. This includes not only the "shaman's disease" of classic ethnographic fame—such as variants of severe mental illness, dementia and schizophrenia, and personality disorders including depression, proneness to alcoholism, and manic affect disorders—but also thin boundaries, social anxiety, and fantasy-prone temperaments.
2. *Primary and secondary sleep disorders*. Narcolepsy, sleep apnea, REM sleep behavior disorder, and insomnia, for example, are all associated with high levels of visions and hypnagogic imagery. Nonphasic and delayed sleep disorders are also associated with historic big dreamers; as Robert Moss, suggests, the only disorder here may be an unwillingness to adapt to one's natural sleep style.[131] In addition, secondary sleep disorders, caused by a variety of bodily illnesses and conditions, disturb the sleep-wake cycle and can instigate lucid dreaming, sleep paralysis, false awakenings, and other varieties of sleep-related threshold visions.
3. *Other diseases and conditions*. Early stages of Parkinson's disease, diffuse Lewy body disease, Charles Bonnet syndrome, epilepsy, and proneness to migraines have all been discussed in relationship to spontaneous visions.[132]
4. *Personal history*. There are strong links between sleep-related vision states with personal histories of trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, history of sexual abuse, loss of culture/refugee status, and social marginalization. Again, these correlations are only part of the overall patterns for nightmare prevalence.

5. *Heritage—or unknown genetic factors*. We still know very little about the genetic inheritance issue regarding propensity to hallucinate (without mental illness) and experience sleep paralysis visions, lucid dreaming, out-of-body experiences, and other sleep-type phenomena. These could involve creative factors, sleep-wake transitions, and factors that affect circadian rhythms or other unknown biological causes.

There are three major external factors or contexts that "trigger" or make latent these five classes of interior traits, inducing visions and big dreams reliably and when needed.

External Triggering Events for Visions and Big Dreams

1. *Mental and bodily induction techniques*. These are the classic shamanic techniques of ecstacy, including pain, exhaustion, intoxication, sexual stress, mortal combat, sensory deprivation and sensory overload, dancing and chanting, and rhythmic driving, among others. Lucid dreaming and its brethren are particularly induced by disruptions in the circadian rhythm, auto-suggestion, sleep mixed with prayer or meditation, low doses of mind-manifesting substances (*oneirogens*), sleeping in novel places and sacred sites, semi-horizontal body postures for sleeping and meditative techniques that build focus, including playing video games.[133]
2. *Cultural support*. Having community ceremonies or at least social allowance for the periodic calling of dreams and visions greatly increases the likelihood of success in inducing big dreams as well as success in such dreams' emotional integration afterward to achieve lasting change.[134] Vision-questing societies are exemplars here, as well as modern lucid dreaming forums on the Internet.[135]
3. *Current eco-social conditions*. Environmental stress and trauma, loss of habitat and homeland, social isolation from cultural roots, conflict and warfare, colonialism, and other forms of social upheaval all are known to increase the sociopolitical use of big dreams and visions. As such, the promotion and receiving of dreams and visions are a part of charismatic leadership, rebellion and revolution, and religious

revitalization movements and other integrative attempts to conjoin a vanquished culture's belief structures with new social realities. The anthropology of dreaming has largely been operating under these conditions since World War II (as "post-contact religious resistance"), although the basic patterns have been observed in many historical conflicts as well.[136]

Paleolithic Echoes and Evolutionary Psychology

We are modern humans with visionary brains that developed deep in the Paleolithic era. Again, I am not positing that there is an "original" or "pre-cultural" cognition pattern located in our brains that erases modern history and activates the prehistoric past: even Paleolithic cultures undoubtedly had variable and regional effects on dreams and their expression. Despite the tremendous role of culture and language in forming concepts and constructing realities, universal neurological givens continue to manifest extraordinary experiences that we could have told (or mimed) around the campfire a hundred thousand years ago and be understood. My focus in this chapter has been on the aspects of shamanic states that are still easily accessible in lucid dreaming and other related states. Lucid nightmares are the most obvious of these misunderstood existential bridges to the "well of sorrows" and other cognitive landscapes that populated our ancestors' lives and are still respected in traditional societies today, but OBEs, false awakenings and sleep paralysis succubus encounters can be just as impactful for modern dreamers who have no training in the healing and visionary arts. The well is always full, and the dreams come back quickly when called. By "unearthing the Paleolithic mind in lucid dreams," the title of this chapter, we can acknowledge the full spectrum of our cognitive heritage and make conscious the patterns of transformation that are unique to our own personal journeys as we delve deeper into lucidity—whether that be a propensity for dark lucid nightmares, telepathic healing dreams or non-duality.

This line of thought ultimately questions the depth of cultural relativity and postmodernism to explain the variability in cognition styles in altered states around the world and throughout history. Winkelman explains, "The cross cultural manifestations [of shamanism] directly contradict the

hypothesis of cultural selection; instead we have in shamanism an ecologically specific adaptation of hunter-gatherer societies to innate potentials that reflect *exaptations* [emphasis added] of an ancient primate capacity for ritual".[137] *Exaptations* are characteristics that evolved for one reason, but are not currently considered adaptive. One popular example is feathers, which might have originally arisen for their insulation properties and only later became useful for flight.[138] Prehuman primate rituals, argues Winkelman, coordinated group behavior, promoted bonding through emotional attachment, managed stress with hypnotizability, and fostered group cohesion with nighttime drumming rituals.[139] In other words, shamanic rituals may be exaptations because they arose due to pressures from natural selection but were much later, in early Paleolithic societies (and still today), co-opted into religious behaviors that have direct effects on individuals' immune responses, psycho-social health, and community belonging. Thus, integrative consciousness is healing both for individuals and for the communities that provide support for these states.

The rise of metacognition—and its communication to others—in lucid dreams and visions serves to perpetuate certain features of the cross-culturally verified shamanic worldview that has been central to belief systems for 99% of the time our species has been recognizably human. The core principles of the shamanic worldview are that the "universe is alive, conscious, dynamic, interconnected, and responsive."[140] Lucid dreams, big dreams and waking visions are where the dead talk, where spirits threaten or heal, and where we integrate emotional and intellectual concerns through ritual acts and soul-rending trips beyond the everyday ego. In this way, dreaming may be an *exaptation* on its own.

Of course, the evolutionary function of REM is still in dispute, including whether it even has one. (Stephen LaBerge comments in the Foreword to this volume that all ideas should be submitted to the "Darwinian Reality Test," and that holds doubly true for evolutionary theories!) REM is costly, suggesting an original biological function that probably does not have anything to do with dreaming. Some current theories include REM as a warming mechanism for the brain from the depths of sleep or as a paralysis process that originally was tied to fight-or-flight responses. More cognition-based theories see REM as a mechanism for memory consolidation, or as an expression of instinctual drives.[141]

Patrick McNamara goes further, suggesting a psychological function for REM nightmares in particular, which have all the markings of an advantageous trait because they cannot be compellingly faked. Case-in-point: fluff pieces about dreams in the media often include a made up dream narrative that the journalist thinks is sufficiently "weird"—we know instantly they are not real dreams. *Real* nightmares provide enhanced vulnerability and memorability to the nightmare teller (i.e., status) as well as authentic information that is important to the listener and the group.[142] The inherited tendencies for sleep paralysis visions, non-dual experiences and other borderland states could support this pattern as well.

More general evolutionary theories in dreaming also focus on valid information gathering for individuals, in terms of predicting threats, recognizing patterns, manifesting hopes and fears, and—most compelling for me—workshopping creative choices in a complex eco-social environment (in which the social threat of being abandoned feels more real than the threat of a tiger eating you because you were abandoned).[143]

As shamanic and integrative states of consciousness in general make up a healing system that includes placebo and nocebo responses, hypnotic suggestibility, emotional mastery, and the "spooky" information retrieval through contact with otherworldly creatures ("spirits"), it follows that those of us interested in lucid dreaming over a period of decades tend to fall into these ancient cognitive ruts over time.[144] In particular, lucid dreams are an environment *par excellence* for transforming visual symbols in order to affect emotions as well as healing responses, a key shamanic skill. My own dreams have followed this trajectory; the dreams brought me to an interest in healing, not the other way around. As Stanley Krippner puts it, this is our own personal mythology in action.[145] The dreaming is transformative, but it works slowly on us, as revealed by repetitive dream themes over years and decades.

Over all, our work as modern humans is to integrate these powerful and ancient neurological trends—and to work around their limitations—with modern traditions and beliefs. This is not necessarily "progress," as our own worldviews have their own ensnarements, including the cloudy lens of commercial rationalism with its emphasis on top-down objectification, isolation, and emotional sterility. However, simply donning the cultures of others has its limitations and can bring to the fore hidden power dynamics that derive from those same colonial attitudes that reflect our

disenfranchisement from spirit in the first place. In his book *Dreamseekers*, world traveler Harvey Arden writes about the way indigenous cultures feel drained by Westerners' appropriation of their healing ways. One young aboriginal man fumes, "Get your own Dreamtime. Don't take ours."[146]

To be sure, this is also not to say that modern lucid dreamers are actually shamans or enlightened people. Overall, Euro-American-style lucid dreaming is influenced more by marketing language selling to the common denominator (and powered by the American values of manifest destiny and, deeper still, colonial schemas of conquest) than the skill of dream manipulation as practiced in Eastern esoteric communities or the complex soul-travel actions performed by shamanic practitioners. Still, I would suggest that most modern lucid dreamers are playing in the shallow end of a very deep and ancient pool that not only has powerful psychosomatic powers (both positive and negative), but is also home to some strange bedfellows (like encounters with incubi and ancestral spirits). In answer to Carl Sagan and Richard Dawkins, this is why we still live in a demon-haunted world and why God will not go away: not because of irrational beliefs and a lack of Oxford education, but due, at least in part, to the continual presence of visionary states of consciousness in human lives.[147]

Conclusion

My emphasis in this chapter on the shamanic side of integrative consciousness is intended to correct for an imbalance in the literature that prizes lucid dreaming as naturally exhibiting a scientific rationality or, alternatively, sees it as an affectless witnessing posture akin to insight meditation. These potentials are accurate, but incomplete. I reject the notion that the only limit to lucid dreaming is our own imagination; rather, the limitations that apply are the neurologically driven range of experiences granted to us in highly synchronized brain states that blur the boundaries between wakefulness and sleep. Kevin Nelson puts it like this: "spiritual experience erupts in the borderlands between consciousness, unconsciousness and dreaming—when our consciousness states are not whole but fragmented and blended with one another."[148] Substitute the phrase "not whole but fragmented" with "integrative," and we have booted up the healing

perspective described by the world's mystics and dreamers. I do not find fragments in my study of lucid dreams, but a beautiful and mysterious process of self-organization that transcends my own waking consciousness. Oliver Sacks, in his discussion of the self-organizing activity of the brain, quotes the metaphor used by early 20th-century neurologist C. S. Sherrington: the brain is " 'an enchanted loom,' weaving ever-changing, dissolving, but always meaningful patterns."[149] Making meaning is what we do.

As a life practice, lucidity is the starting gate, not the goal. Going lucid is actually the easy part. Maintaining it and riding the chaotic wave requires an entirely different skill set that does not lend itself well to marketing lingo and our culture's love for quick fixes. I suspect that many beginner lucid dreamers have given up the quest once they realized that dreaming is not always a pliable virtual reality beyond its initial pleasure dome. The ancient and mature practice of lucid dreaming, joined once again with the chthonic power of initiatory lucid nightmares and the mythic vitality of other borderland states of consciousness, is revealed as a dynamic and lifelong process that has both ups and downs. To cross the threshold, a lot is expected of the dreamer. Have courage and, just as importantly, patience. The upshot of all this is rebirth, renewal, and an expanded insight into what makes us human.

Notes

1. David Lewis-Williams, *The Mind in the Cave* (London: Thames, 2002), 130.
2. Barbara Miller et al. *Anthropology* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2005), 224–241; Brian Hayden, *Shamans, Sorcerers and Saints: A Prehistory of Religion* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2003), 90–95, 97–98, 108–115; Brian Fagan, *From Black Land to Fifth Sun: The Science of Sacred Sites* (Reading, MA: Helix Books, 1998), 4.
3. Even though anatomically modern humans (and the capacity for symbolic thought, language, and complex social behavior) most likely existed for another 50,000 years or so prior to the Creative Explosion (90,000 BP), we do not have much physical evidence for earlier endeavors that indicate the *socialization* of the creative dreaming mind. This may simply be because these peoples were constantly on the move in a series of African diasporas (causing huge issues in archaeological recovery), or it may point to a true emergence of neuro-socio-creative complexity due to the unique eco-social pressures of Western Europe during the last ice age, which included genetic comingling with European Neanderthals (who, by the way, had their own creative life discernible through ritual burials and the use of red ochre for marking, a substance that otherwise has no utilitarian value). Miller et al. *Anthropology*, 2005, 224–241; Hayden, *Shamans, Sorcerers and*

Saints, 2003, Lewis-Williams, *The Mind in the Cave*, 71–73; Richard Green et al., "A Draft Sequence of the Neanderthal Genome," *Science* 2010; 328:710–722.

4. For example: Mircea Eliade's *Techniques of Ecstasy*, Joseph Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, and Carl Jung's *Man and His Symbols*.
5. Jorge Conesa-Sevilla, *Dreaming with Bear*, presented at the Annual Conference for the International Association for the Study of Dreams, Montreal, Canada, May 2008.
6. This viewpoint reflects the constructive and also the existential-phenomenological perspective of dreaming, in which dreaming over the lifespan can be seen as a process of psychological growth, change and transformation. Without direct social support, such as in normative Western culture, this process is stilted, although, as Carl Jung reminded, the work may still eventually get done. See Ernest Rossi, *Dreams and the Growth of Personality* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1972), 142; Alan Moffitt, "The Creation of Self: Self-Reflectiveness in Dreaming and Waking,"*Psychological Perspectives* 30 (1994): 42-69. Carl Jung, *Dreams*, ed R.F.C Hall (Princeton, NJ: Bollingen, 1974), paragraph 552.
7. Deirdre Barrett, "An Evolutionary Theory of Dreams and Problem-Solving," in *The New Science of Dreaming*, eds. Deirdre Barrett and Patrick McNamara, volume 3. (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007), 148.
8. Thanks to Charles Laughlin for the cautionary reminder that "Thought implies language," which is an often repeated assumption about the nature of lucidity. Personal communication, February 19, 2014.
9. Ryan Hurd, *Spontaneous Emergence: A Phenomenology of Lucid Dreaming*, MA thesis, John F Kennedy University, 2008, 141–142.
10. As I was raised in the Southeastern United States, it is also perhaps unavoidable that I would boil down the essence of all experience to "sense of place." This metaphor is one of many bodily bases of linguistic thought, as described by George Lakoff, "How Metaphor Structures Dreams: The Theory of Conceptual Metaphor Applied to Dream Analysis," *Dreaming* 3, no. 2 (1993): 77–98.
11. M. Sheets-Johnston, "Phenomenology and Agency," in *Models of the Self*, ed. S. Gallagher and J. Shear (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 1999), 247.
12. Brigitte Holzinger, "Interview with Paul Tholey and Stephen LaBerge," *Lucidity Letter* 9, no. 1 (1990): 102–115.
13. Hurd, *Spontaneous Emergence*, 140–141.
14. In phenomenological language, these biases reveal my dreaming *lifeworld*. See Gordon Globus, *Dream Life, Wake Life* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1987), 89. Interestingly, Globus actually denied lucid dreaming the ability to perform phenomenology, claiming it is impossible to sustain the horizon for reflections. I disagree.
15. Ryan Hurd, "Ancestral Knowledge in Lucid Dreams," *Electric Dreams* 13, no. 4 (2006). http://www.improverse.com/ed-articles/ryan_hurd_2006_apr_ancestral_knowledge.htm; Ryan Hurd, *Sleep Paralysis: A Guide to Hypnagogic Visions and Visitors of the Night* (San Mateo, CA: Hyena Press, 2011); Ryan Hurd, "Integral Archaeology: Process Methodologies for Exploring Prehistoric Rock Art on Ometepe Island, Nicaragua," *Anthropology of Consciousness* 22, no. 1 (2010): 72–94.
16. Sheila Purcell et al., "Waking, Dreaming and Self-Reflection," in *The Functions of Dreaming*, ed. A. Moffitt, M. Kramer, and R. Hoffmann (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1993): 197–260; Alan Moffitt, "The Creation of Self: Self-Reflectiveness in Dreaming and Waking," *Psychological Perspectives* 30 (1994): 42–69.
17. Jayne Gackenbach, "The Psychological Content of Lucid versus Non-lucid Dreams," in *Conscious Mind, Sleeping Brain*, ed. Jayne Gackenbach and Stephen LaBerge (New York: Plenum, 1988), 185.

18. Stephen LaBerge, *Lucid Dreaming: The Power of Being Awake and Aware in Your Dreams* (New York: Tarcher, 1985), 107.
19. Harry Hunt, *The Multiplicity of Dreams* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 122.
20. George Gillespie, "The Internal Image during Visual Perception: An Introspectionist Analysis," *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 70 (1990): 963–983. Also see George Gillespie, "Dream Light: Categories of Visual Experience during Lucid Dreaming," *Lucidity* 10, nos. 1–2, (1991): 25–27.
21. Kellogg, Edward III, "Mapping Territories: A Phenomenology of Lucid Dream Reality," *Lucidity Letter* 8, no. 2 (1989): 81–97.
22. Natalie Depraz, "The Phenomenological Reduction as Praxis," in *The View from Within*, ed. Francis Valera and J. Shear (Lawrence, KS: Imprint Academic, 1999), 95–110.
23. Fariba Bogzaran, *Experiencing the Divine in the Lucid Dream State*, MA thesis, University of Michigan, 1990.
24. Mary Ziemer, "The Alchemy and Archetype of Black Light in Lucid Surrender," *DreamTime* 34, no. 3 (2011): 6–9, 36–38.
25. Michelle Stephen, "Memory, Emotion and the Imaginal Mind," in *Dreaming and the Self*, ed. Jeanne Mageo (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2003), 107.
26. Kelly Bulkeley, *The Wondering Brain: Thinking about Religion with and beyond Cognitive Neuroscience* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 33.
27. Ryan Hurd, *Lucid Dreaming: Participating in Our Inner Wilderness*, paper presented at the Annual Conference for the International Association for the Study of Dreams, Montreal, July 10, 2008. Also see Fernando Santos-Granero, "Pedro Casanto's Nightmares: Lucid Dreaming in Amazonia and the New Age Movement," *Tipití: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America* 1, no. 2 (2003): 179–209.
28. LaBerge, *Lucid Dreaming: The Power of Being Awake*, 107.
29. Hunt, *The Multiplicity of Dreams*, 119; Patricia Garfield, *Pathway to Ecstasy: The Way of the Dream Mandala* (Austin, TX: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1979.)
30. Ryan Hurd, *Lucid Nightmares: The Dark Side of Self-Awareness in Dreams*, presentation given at the Annual Conference for the International Association for the Study of Dreams, Chicago, June 27, 2008.
31. For example, see Celia Green and Charles McCreery, *Lucid Dreaming: The Paradox of Consciousness during Sleep* (London: Routledge, 1994), 47–49, 121.
32. Erin Langley, "Dream Doctoring and Lucid Dreaming as Imbalance," *Lucid Dreaming for the Earth* (August 27, 2011). http://luciddreamconservationproject.blogspot.com/2011/08/dream-doctoring-and-lucid-dreaming-as.html.
33. Rhea White, "What Are Exceptional Human Experiences?" *Exceptional Human Experiences* (1999). http://www.ehe.org/display/ehe-page3439.html?ID=6.
34. Hunt, *The Multiplicity of Dreams*, 122.
35. Fariba Bogzaran, "Lucid Art and Hyperspace Reality," *Dreaming* 13, no. 1 (2003): 29–42.
36. Rhea White, "List of Potential EHEs," 2000. http://www.ehe.org/display/ehe-pagedc08.html?ID=3.
37. Tore Nielsen, "Cognition in REM and NREM Sleep: A Review and Possible Reconciliation of Two Models of Sleep Mentation," *Behavioral & Brain Science* 23 (2000): 851–866; Stanley Krippner et al., *Extraordinary Dreams and How to Work with Them* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2002); J. Hart et al., *Dreaming and Waking: The Functional Approach to Using Dreams* (Los Angeles: Center Foundation Press, 1981).
38. The phrase "autonomous imagination zone" is a play off of Hakem Bay's "temporary autonomous zone," a liberated area of land, time or imagination where life can be experienced at maximum

intensity. Hakim Bey, *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism* (New York: Autonomedia, 1991).

39. Harry Hunt and Robert Ogivie, "Lucid Dreams in Their Natural Series: Phenomenological and Psychophysiological Findings to Meditative States," in *Conscious Mind, Sleep Brain*, ed. Stephen LaBerge and Jayne Gackenbach (New York: Plenum Press, 1988), 389–417; David Hufford, "Visionary Spiritual Experiences in an Enchanted World," *Anthropology and Humanism* 35, no. 2 (2010): 142–158; Michael Winkelman, *Shamanism: A Biopsychosocial Paradigm of Consciousness and Healing*, 2nd ed. (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2010), 135.
40. Fariba Bogzaran and Daniel Deslauriers, *Integral Dreaming* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2012).
41. In terms of the freedom from cognitive domestication supported in the anthropology of sleep, see Charles Laughlin, *Communing with the Gods: Consciousness, Culture and the Dream Brain* (Brisbane, Australia: Daily Grail Press, 2011), 66; C. Worthman and M. Melby, "Towards a Comparative Developmental Ecology of Human Sleep," in *Adolescent Sleep Patterns: Biological, Social, and Psychological Influences*, ed. M. Carskadon (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 69–117.
42. For discussion of the "consciousness rebirth" in the 20th century, see Eugene Taylor, *Shadow Culture: Psychology and Spirituality in America* (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 1999), 262–281; Robert Van de Castle, *Our Dreaming Mind* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994), 442. Also, the Society of the Anthropology of Consciousness, a chapter of the American Anthropological Association, was founded in 1974, in part to discuss the legacy of Carlos Castaneda and further the anthropological study of altered states of consciousness. See Mark Schroll and Stephen Schwartz, "Whither Psi and Anthropology? An Incomplete History of SAC's Origins, Its Relationship with Transpersonal Psychology and the Untold Stories of Castaneda's Controversy," *Anthropology of Consciousness* 16, no. 1 (2005): 6–24.
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44. Ethan Watters, *Crazy like Us: The Globalization of the American Psyche* (New York: Free Press, 2011).
45. Winkelman, *Shamanism*, 23.
46. Michael Winkelman, "The Evolution of Consciousness? Transpersonal Theories in Light of Cultural Relativism," *Anthropology of Consciousness* 4, no. 3 (1993): 3–9.
47. Winkelman, *Shamanism*, 141.
48. Ibid., 139.
49. For example, see George Gillespie, "Without a Guru: An Account of My Lucid Dreaming," in *Conscious Mind, Sleeping Brain* (New York: Plenum, 1988), 343–350; David Hufford, *The Terror That Comes in the Night* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 15.
50. Hayden, *Shamans, Sorcerers and Saints*, 46; Also see J. Halifax, *Shaman: The Wounded Healer* (London: Thames and Hudon, 1982).
51. Winkelman, *Shamanism*, 43; Laughlin, *Communing with the Gods*, 159; Barbara Tedlock, *Woman in the Shaman's Body* (New York: Bantam, 2005), 21.
52. Harry Hunt and Robert Ogivie, "Lucid Dreams in Their Natural Series," 392.
53. LaBerge, *Lucid Dreaming: The Power of Being Awake*; Susan Blackmore, "Lucid Dreams and OBEs," *Lucidity* 10, nos. 1–2 (1991): 107–117; Charles Tart, *The End of Materialism: How Evidence for the Paranormal Is Bringing Science and Spirituality Together* (Oakland, CA: New Harbringer Publications, 2009). Also see the Aware Study at Horizon Research Foundation, http://horizonresearch.org.
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(2004): 243–258.

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56. Paul Chambers, *Sex and the Paranormal* (London: Blandford, 1999), 25.
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60. P. C. Bressloff et al., "Geometric Visual Hallucinations, Euclidean Symmetry and the Functional Architecture of the Striate Cortex,"*Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, Series B, no. 356 (London: 2000): 299–330; David Lewis-Williams and T. Dowson, "The Sign of All Times," *Current Anthropology* 29, no. 2 (1988): 201–245; Oliver Sacks, *Migraine, Revised and Expanded* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 281–285.
61. David Luke, "Rock Art or Rorschach: Is There More to Entoptics Than Meets the Eye?" *Time and Mind*, 3 no. 1 (2010): 9–28. Another line of doubt comes from Mark Solms's research with the dreaming visionary capacity even when the primary sensory cortex is damaged. Mark Solms, *The Neuropsychology of Dreams: A Clinico-Anatomical Study* (Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1997).
62. See Green and McCreery, *Lucid Dreaming*, 65–76.
63. Rebecca Cathcart, "Winding Through 'Big Dreams,' " *New York Times*, July 3, 2007. http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/03/health/psychology/03dream.html.
64. Hirokazu Furuya et al., "Sleep and Non-Sleep-Related Hallucinations: Relationship to Ghost Tales," *Dreaming*, 19 no. 4 (2009): 232–238.
65. Hirokazu Furuya and Akihiro Watanabe, "Sleep Related Hallucinations and Ghost Tales," in *Encyclopedia of Sleep and Dreams* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2010): 708–710.
66. Paul Devereux, *Haunted Land* (London: Platkus, 2001), 141–155; Simon Sherwood, "Black Dog Apparitions," *Journal for the American Society for Psychical Research* 94 (2000): 94–164.
67. Hirokazu et al., "Sleep and Non-Sleep-Related Hallucinations," 232.
68. Paul Devereux, *Haunted Land*, 190.
69. Hunt, *The Multiplicity of Dreams*, 122.
70. Ibid., 132.
71. Ibid., 129.
72. Cathcart, "Winding Through 'Big Dreams.' "
73. Jorge Conesa-Sevilla, *Wrestling with Ghosts* (Minneapolis: Xlibris, 2004); David Hufford, "Visionary Spiritual Experiences in an Enchanted World," *Anthropology and Humanism* 35, no. 2 (2010): 142–158.
74. David Young, "Visitors of the Night: A Creative Energy Model of Spontaneous Visions," in *Being Changed by Cross-Cultural Encounters: The Anthropology of Extraordinary Experience*, ed. David Young and Jean-Guy Goulet (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1994), 166–194; Edith Turner, "A Visible Spirit Form in Zambia," in *Being Changed by Cross-Cultural Encounters*, ed. David Young and Jean-Guy Goulet (Orchard Park: Broadview Press, 1994), 71–95; Marianne

George, "Dreams, Reality, and the Desires and Intent of Dreamers as Experienced by a Field Worker," *Anthropology of Consciousness* 6, no. 3 (1995): 17–33.

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78. Robert Ogilvie et al., "Lucid Dreaming and Alpha Activity," *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 55 (1982): 795–808; Jayne Gackenbach et al., "Physiological Correlates of 'Consciousness' During Sleep in a Single TM Practitioner," *Sleep Research* 16 (1987): 230; Hunt, *The Multiplicity of Dreams*.
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81. Winkelman, "The Evolution of Consciousness?"; Michael Winkelman, "Shamans, Priests and Witches: A Cross-Cultural Study of Magico-religious Practitioners," *Anthropological Research Papers*, no. 44 (Arizona State University, 1992); Bruce Lerro, *From Earth Spirits to Sky Gods: The Sociological Origins of Monotheism, Individualism and Hyper-Abstract Reasoning, from the Stone Age to the Axial Iron Age* (Oxford, UK: Lexington Books, 2000); Brian Hayden, *Shamans, Sorcerers and Saints: A Prehistory of Religion* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2003).
82. David Whitley, *Cave Paintings and the Human Spirit* (Amherst, MA: Prometheus Books, 2009), 184.
83. Charles Tart, "The 'High Dream:' A New State of Consciousness," in *Altered States of Consciousness*, ed. Charles Tart (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons/Anchor, 1969/1972), 171–176.
84. Jeremy Narby, *Cosmic Serpent* (New York: Putnam Press, 1998); Eduardo Luna, "Some Reflections on the Global Expansion of Ayahuasca," in *The Internationalization of Ayahuasca*, ed. Beatriz Caiuby Labate and Henrik Jungaberle (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2011), 125; Barbara Tedlock, *Woman in the Shaman's Body* (New York: Bantam, 2005), 149.
85. Frank Echenhoer, The Dynamics of Healing and Creativity during Ayahuasca Shamanic Journeys, presentation at the annual conference for the Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness, Berkeley, CA, March 20, 2010; U. Voss et al., "Lucid Dreaming: A State of Consciousness with Features of Both Waking and Non-lucid Dreaming," Sleep 32, no. 9 (2009): 1191–1200; Martin Dresler et al., "Neural Correlates of Dream Lucidity Obtained from Contrasting Lucid versus Non-lucid REM Sleep: A Combined EEG/fMRI Case Study," *Sleep* 35, no. 7 (2012): 1017–1020; Ursula Voss et al., "Lucid Dreaming: A State of Consciousness with Features of Both Waking and Non-lucid Dreaming," *Sleep* 32, no. 9 (2009): 1191–1200. Other researchers have noted that Voss et al.'s study is based on lucid-control dreams, and that different kinds of lucid dreams most likely have different neurological markers, and Stephen LaBerge has critically questioned the physiological basis for Voss's assertions of a "hybrid" state. The poetic assertion, of course, that lucid dreaming is "like being awake" has been made by countless philosophers, mystics and scientists. See Sérgio A. Mota-Rolim et al., "Different Kinds of Subjective Experience during Lucid Dreaming May Have Different Neural Substrates," *International Journal of Dream*

Research 3, no. 1 (2010): 33–35; Stephen LaBerge, "Signal-verified Lucid Dreaming Proves that REM sleep Can Support Reflective Consciousness," *International Journal of Dream Research* 3, no. 1 (2010): 26-27.

86. Gianluca Toro and Benjamin Thomas, *Drugs of the Dreaming* (Rochester, VT: Park Street Press, 2007), 5, 51, 80; J. D. Arthur, Salvia divinorum: *Doorway to Thought-Free Awareness* (South Paris, ME: Park Street Press, 2010); D. Technical, "The Use of *Salvia divinorum* to Facilitate Lucid Dreaming," *Oneirology Blog* (2010). http://lucidconsciousness.com/the-use-of-salvia-divinorum-to-facilitate-lucid-dreaming/.
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88. Frank Galvin and Ernest Hartmann, "Nightmares: Terror of the Night," in *Dreamtime and Dreamwork*, ed. Stanley Krippner (Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher, 1990), 240.
89. Frederik van Eeden, "A Study of Dreams," in *Altered States of Consciousness*, 2nd ed., ed. Charles Tart (New York: Double Day, 1972), 158.
90. Jayne Gackenbach, "Jungian, Paul Kugler, on Assumptions of Reality [Interview by Jayne Gackenbach and Harry Hunt]," *ASD Newsletter* 4, no. 6 (1987): 8–12, 16. http://www.asdreams.org/magazine/articles/dt4-6_kugler.htm.
91. G. Scott Sparrow, "Letter from Scott Sparrow," *Lucidity* 10, nos. 1–2 (1991): 421–424. Stephen LaBerge quoted this nightmare in 1990 as an example of Sparrow's failure to be fully lucid, and he continues to use the example in his most recent and most accessible book. Stephen LaBerge and Howard Rheingold, *Exploring the World of Lucid Dreaming* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1990), 230–231; Stephen LaBerge, *Lucid Dreaming: A Concise Guide to Awakening in Your Dreams and Waking Life* (Boulder, CO: Sounds True, 2009), 51.
92. Geneviève Robert and Antonio Zadra, "Thematic and Content Analysis of Idiopathic Nightmares and Bad Dreams," *Sleep* 37, no. 2 (2014): 409-417. This study was the first to analyze nightmares versus bad dreams using the Hall Van de Castle system.
93. Ryan Hurd, "Lucid Nightmares," in *Encyclopedia of Sleep and Dreams*, ed. Patrick McNamara and Deirdre Barrett (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2010), 403–406.
94. Van Eeden, "A Study of Dreams," 158; Sparrow, "Letter from Scott Sparrow"; Hurd, *Spontaneous Emergence*. These sorts of dreams are not uncommon in other cultural settings, such as in Tibetan Buddhism, in which lucid dreams can be an avenue for meditating upon wrathful aspects of deities while attempting to maintain equanimity.
95. LaBerge and Rheingold, *Exploring the World of Lucid Dreaming*, 227; Green and McCreery, *Lucid Dreaming*, 122.
96. Chris Olsen, volume 2 of this work.
97. LaBerge and Rheingold, *Exploring the World of Lucid Dreaming*, 222; LaBerge, *Lucid Dreaming: A Concise Guide to Awakening*, 51. I'm appreciative of Stephen LaBerge for discussing his views with me after reviewing an earlier version of this chapter.
98. Gordon Halliday, "Lucid Dreaming: Use in Nightmares and Sleep-Wake Confusion," in *Conscious Mind, Sleeping Brain*, ed. Jayne Gackenbach and Stephen LaBerge (New York: Plenum Press, 1988), 306.
99. Ryan Hurd, presentation given during "The Transformative Power of Dream Studies" panel,

presented at the Annual Conference of the International Association for the Study of Dreams, Bridgewater, MA: June 24, 2006.

100. Personal journal, November 2005. I edited the dream only so as not to include personal names.
101. E. L. Rossi, *Dreams and the Growth of Personality* (New York: Pergamon, 1972); Carl Jung, *Dreams* (Princeton, NJ: Bollingen Press, 1974), 118–120. Dream series are also valued in the existential tradition of clinical dreamwork. See P. Erik Craig, "An Existential Approach to Dreamwork," in *Dreamtime and Dreamwork*, ed. Stanley Krippner (New York: G. P. Putnam & Sons, 1990), 69–77.
102. Hunt, *The Multiplicity of Dreams*, 125.
103. Personal journal, March 2008.
104. Ryan Hurd, *Sleep Paralysis* (San Mateo: Hyena Press, 2011), 28.
105. Adler, *Sleep Paralysis*, 114.
106. James A. Cheyne and Gordon Pennycook, "Sleep Paralysis Post-episode Distress," *Clinical Psychological Science* 1, no. 2 (2013): 120-134.
107. The assumption of mental illness continues despite the fact that Charles Tart listed lucid dreams prominently as a gateway to shamanic consciousness as early as 1969, in his *Altered States of Consciousness*.
108. Hunt, *The Multiplicity of Dreams*, 124.
109. Ernest Hartmann, *The Nightmare* (New York: Basic Book Publishers, 1984), 39.
110. Ibid., 108.
111. Frank Galvin, "The Boundary Characteristics of Lucid Dreamers," *Psychiatric Journal of the University of Ottawa* 15 (1990): 73–78; Michael Schredl and Daniel Erlacher, "Lucid Dreaming Frequency and Personality," *Personality and Individual Differences* 37 (2004): 1463–1473; E. A. Boerger, "Associations among Boundary Structure, Gender, and Beliefs about Control of Dreams," *Dreaming* 19, no. 3 (2009): 172–186.
112. M. Neider et al., "Lucid Dreaming and Ventromedial versus Dorsolateral Prefrontal Task Performance," *Consciousness and Cognition* 20 (2011): 234–244.
113. Evelyn Doll, Georg Gittler, and Brigitt Holzinger, "Dreaming, Lucid Dreaming and Personality," *International Journal of Dream Research* 2, no. 2 (2009): 52–57. However, support for "well-being" was not found in Michael Schredl and Daniel Erlacher, "Lucid Dreaming Frequency and Personality."
114. Personal journal, September 2003.
115. Stanley Krippner et al., *Extraordinary Dreams*, 135; Arnold Mindell, *The Shaman's Body* (San Francisco: Harper, 1993).
116. Brigitte Holzinger, "Interview with Paul Tholey and Stephen LaBerge," 102–115.
117. Pam Atwater, "Is There a Hell? Surprising Observations about Near Death Experience," *Journal of Near Death Experience* 10, no. 3 (1992): 149–160; Bruce Greyson and Nancy Evans Bush, "Distressing Near Death Experience," *Psychiatry* 55 (1992): 95; Chris Bache, "A Perinatal Interpretation of Frightening Near Death Experiences," *Journal of Near-Death Studies* 13, no. 1 (1994): 25–45.
118. Jayne Gackenbach, "Frameworks for Understanding Lucid Dreaming: A Review," *Dreaming* 1, no. 2 (1991): 124.
119. Patrick McNamara, *Nightmares: The Science and Solution of Those Frightening Visions during Sleep* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008), 76.
120. G. Scott Sparrow, *Lucid Dreaming: A Path of Transcendence or Transformation, or Both?*, presented at the Annual Conference of the International Association for the Study of Dreams, Asheville, NC, July 1, 2010. http://www.dreamanalysistraining.com/page25/page25.html.

121. Bill Plotkin, *Soul Craft: Where Psyche and Nature Meet* (Novato: New World Library, 2002), 24–30.
122. Scott Sparrow, *Lucid Dreaming: A Path of Transcendence or Transformation*.
123. David Lukoff, "Visionary Spiritual Experiences," *Southern Medical Journal* 100, no. 6 (2007): 635–641; Stan and Christina Grof, *Spiritual Emergency: When Personal Transformation Becomes a Crisis* (Los Angeles: Tarcher, 1989).
124. James Hillman, *The Dream and the Underworld* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979).
125. Chris Bache, *Dark Night, Early Dawn* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2000).
126. Santos-Granero, "Pedro Casanto's Nightmares," 205.
127. Personal journal, November 2009.
128. Neurologist Oliver Sacks has also greatly helped break down the assumption that all visions are pathologically derived. See Oliver Sacks, *Hallucinations* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012).
129. David Whitley, *Cave Paintings*, 220–227.
130. For example, see Tom Froese et al., "Turing Instabilities in Biology, Culture, and Consciousness? On the Enactive Origins of Symbolic Material Culture," *Adaptive Behavior* 21, no. 3 (2013): 199–214.
131. Robert Moss, "The Modern Myth of Sleep That Is Contrary to Nature and Diminishes Dreams," *DreamGates Blog*, February 2012. http://blog.beliefnet.com/dreamgates/2012/02/the-modern-myth-of-sleep-that-is-contrary-to-nature-and-diminishes-dreams.html.
132. Sacks, *Hallucinations*.
133. Jayne Gackenbach has convincingly shown that avid video gamers have more lucid dreamers than the average non-gamer, and that video games can be considered a lucidity training technique on par with meditation that develops concentration, proprioception, and self-esteem. See Jayne Gackenbach, "Video Game Play and Lucid Dreams," *Dreaming* 16, no. 2 (2006): 96–110; Jayne Gackenbach, "Psychological Considerations in Pursuing Lucid Dreaming Research," *International Journal of Dream Research* 3, no.1 (2010): 11–12.
134. We can see what happens when these systems break down or are incomplete, such as in modern ayahuasca ceremonies, after which participants often suffer mental health relapses or descent in depression when they return home from the jungle and have no assistance in integration. See Ryan Hurd, "The Possibilities and Risks of Ayahuasca as a Sacred Pilgrimage," *Brave New Traveler*, November 8, 2010. http://matadornetwork.com/bnt/the-possibilities-and-risks-of-ayahuasca-as-a-sacred-pilgrimage/
135. Lee Irwin, *The Dream Seekers: Native American Visionary Traditions of the Great Plains* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996).
136. For starters, see Lee Irwin, *Coming down from Above: Prophecy, Resistance, and Renewal in Native American Religions* (Tulsa, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008); Barbara Tedlock, "The Role of Dreams and Visionary Narratives in Mayan Cultural Survival,"*Ethos* 20, no. 4 (1992): 453–476; Joel Martin, *Sacred Revolt: The Muskogees' Struggle for a New World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993).
137. Winkelman, *Shamanism*, 277.
138. S. J. Gould and E. S. Vrba, "Exaptation: A Missing Term in the Science of Form," *Paleobiology* 8, no. 1 (1982): 4–15.
139. Winkelman, *Shamanism*, 272.
140. Tom Crockett, *Stone Age Wisdom* (Gloucester, MA: Fair Winds Press, 2003); Fagan, *From Black Land to Fifth Sun*, 4–10.
141. See Alan Loyd, "Evolution and the Interpretation of (REM Sleep) Dreams," in *The New Science of Dreaming*, ed. Patrick McNamara and Deirdre Barrett (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007), 249–275;

Kevin Nelson, *The Spiritual Doorway in the Brain* (New York: Dutton, 2010).

142. McNamara's nightmare theory is tied to costly signaling theory. See McNamara, *Nightmares*, 61.
143. Deirdre Barrett, "An Evolutionary Theory of Dreams and Problem Solving," in *The New Science of Dreaming*, ed. Deirdre Barrett and Patrick McNamara (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007), 133–153; Katja Valli et al., "The Threat Simulation Theory of the Evolutionary Function of Dreaming: Evidence from Dreams of Traumatized Children," *Consciousness and Cognition* 14, no. 1 (2005): 188–218.
144. Regarding spirits—I'm not commenting on their ontological reality here, simply their phenomenological attributes. I remain skeptical but open to all possibilities, as is necessary for the phenomenological attitude. We see spirits, whatever they are and wherever they come from. See Michael Winkelman, "Spirits as Human Nature and the Fundamental Structures of Consciousness," in *Shaman to Scientist: Essays on Humanity's Search for Spirits*, ed. James Houron (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2004), 59–96. Also for a review of psychic dreams in anthropological context, see David Young, "Dreams and Telepathic Communication," in *Paranthropology: Anthropological Approaches to the Paranormal*, ed. Jack Hunter (Bristol, UK: *Paranthropology*, 2012), 155-179.
145. Stanley Krippner, "Dreams and the Development of a Personal Mythology," *Journal of Mind and Behavior* 7 (1986): 449–461.
146. Harvey Arden, *Dreamkeepers: A Spirit-Journey into Aboriginal Australia* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 3. In answer to this dilemma, Tom Crockett presents a culturally neutral framework of dream shamanism based on Ken Wilber's Integral model that allows us to benefit from our own intellectual traditions as well as the pre-rational wisdom traditions. Tom Crockett, "Integral Shamanic Dreamwork," *DreamTime* 21, no. 1 (2004): 14–17, 43. Robert Moss has also integrated dreamwork with the tenets of shamanism. See Robert Moss, *Active Dreaming* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2011).
147. Carl Sagan, *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1997); Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2006).
148. Nelson, *The Spiritual Doorway*, 38.
149. Sacks, *Hallucinations*, 297.

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15

A Non-dual Perspective on the Question of Dream Control

G. Scott Sparrow

Introduction

Perhaps the most controversial question in the field of lucid dream research is, "To what extent should we try to manipulate our dreams?" This issue begs to be considered once a person can achieve lucidity with some degree of regularity. After all, the expanded sense of freedom unleashed by lucidity permits the dreamer to engage in efforts to create, alter, dismiss, or destroy the dream characters and scenarios, or conversely to accept them as they are, as inherently meaningful and valuable. Some embrace an "anything goes" approach, believing that the dreamer alone should decide how to treat the characters and phenomenal reality of the dream. Others espouse a cautious approach, citing various reasons for why ungoverned experimentation can create psychological and moral hazard. Thus, while the question is obvious, the answer is not.

In his seminal work on lucid dreaming, Van Eeden opened up the topic of dream content manipulation by reporting a dream in which he tried to destroy a dream image.

> I was perfectly well aware that I was dreaming and I considered what sorts of experiments I could make. I began by trying to break glass, by beating it with a stone. I put a small tablet of glass on two stones and struck it with another stone. Yet it would not break. Then I took a fine claret-glass from the table and struck it with my fist, with all my might, at the same time reflecting how dangerous it would be to do this in waking life; yet the glass remained whole. But lo! when I looked at it again after some time, it was broken. It broke all right, but a little too late, like an actor who misses his cue. This gave me a very curious impression of being in a fake-world, cleverly imitated, but with small failures.[1]

Van Eeden's conclusion that he was in a "fake-world" reflects an assumption about dreams that traces its origins to ancient Greece—that dreams simply mimic everyday life, but have no independent life of their own. In such a world, one presumably can do whatever one wishes without consequence. However, Van Eeden goes on to recount another lucid dream in which he arrives at a wholly different conclusion about the nature of the perceived content:

> I saw Prof. van't Hoff, the famous Dutch chemist. . . . I went up to him, knowing very well that he was dead, and continued my inquiry about our condition after death. . . . I asked first why we, lacking our organs of sense, could arrive at any certainty that the person to whom we were talking was really that person and not a subjective illusion. Then van't Hoff said: "Just as in common life; by a general impression."
>
> "Yet," I said, "in common life there is stability of observation and there is consolidation by repeated observation."
>
> "Here also," said van't Hoff. "And the sensation of certainty is the same." Then I had indeed a very strong feeling of certitude that it was really van't Hoff with whom I talked and no subjective illusion.[2]

Van Eeden concluded that it was really Professor van't Hoff on the basis of his own "sensation of certainty." While some may accept this criterion as sufficient, it underscores a significant problem in developing an approach to dream content manipulation that does not hinge on a momentary subjective impression. If the dream imagery is entirely subjective and self-generated (i.e., "fake"), then it is reasonable to believe that the dreamer can manipulate it without concern for psychological or ethical repercussions. But if the dream imagery mediates, at least to some extent, actual exchanges between persons or objective aspects of the inner self, then the dream ego would do well to treat it respectfully—to do otherwise might reap the kind of moral and psychological hazard that we risk whenever we are tempted to manipulate waking relationships. Further, treating the dream characters disrespectfully might instill patterns of relating that would fail to translate into ethically defensible waking behaviors.[3]

The problem is further illustrated when a dreamer's "sensation of certainty" gives way to a completely different conclusion in the same dream. For instance, a friend of mine once shared a lucid dream in which he was walking beside his girlfriend and talking to her about their lives in a very intimate and meaningful way. But then, the dream companion abruptly turned to him with a cold blank stare, looked deeply into his eyes, and said, "Sleep,

sleep . . .” as if she was trying to hypnotize him. He awoke feeling afraid, worried that his girlfriend had suddenly become strange and demonic. He subsequently asked me, “Was it really my girlfriend, or just an image of her?” My answer, which seemed to satisfy my friend, was that she was perhaps both: that the initial soul-to-soul encounter had devolved into a confrontation with a distorted image of her due to his inability to remain open or transparent to the experience. Unbeknownst to both of us at the time, he had significant unresolved psychodynamic issues with his mother, whom he regarded as excessively selfish and controlling, which wreaked havoc in his marriage years later.

My purpose in this chapter is not to take a hard-and-fast position on manipulating dream content, nor to venture an opinion whether some dream characters are ultimately “real” (or not), but rather to present a developmental view of the dreamer-dream relationship that preserves the importance of lucidity while respecting the mystery and autonomy of the dream imagery. My first inklings of this integrated solution, which permits a sophisticated answer to the question of dream control, came to me in a lucid dream many years ago. In the dream:

> *I am lucid and looking for the light. Everything around me is glowing, but as soon as I concentrate on a particular glowing object—hoping that the form will dissolve into light—the object loses its luster, and appears in its ordinary physical state. As I am growing progressively frustrated at my inability to see through the forms of the dream, a woman walks up to me and says simply, “You must first learn to love the form in order to see the light within it.”*

This dream may well contain all that we need to know about the question of whether we should control our dreams. But let me retrace my steps through 40 years of involvement in the lucid dream field, so as to arrive again at a similar conclusion.

The Beginnings

In 1974, on a sunny day in south Georgia, I sat on the back porch of my apartment near West Georgia College and began writing on a legal notebook what appears to have been the first masters thesis on lucid dreaming. I was only 23, and very little had been written on the topic at the time.[4] Supported

largely by Jungian theory, I hypothesized that lucid dreaming represented no less than a significant evolutionary step in the dream state that paralleled the emergence of the nascent ego in the waking state thousands of years ago. I also suggested that lucidity conferred the same advantages and risks of that monumental achievement.

My thesis turned into a little book, *Lucid Dreaming: Dawning of the Clear Light* (1976), which was the first book on lucid dreaming published in North America. After Hearne and LaBerge independently established lucid dreaming as a true rapid eye movement (REM) sleep phenomenon, lucid dream research became a legitimate field of its own.[5] There were three main prongs during the initial decade of inquiry: induction studies spearheaded by LaBerge; inquiries into the relationship between lucidity and various personality characteristics led by Gackenbach; and first-person treatises addressing the psychological and spiritual value of lucid dreaming, such as Kelzer's *The Sun and the Shadow*, as well as my own book. During this fertile decade, Gackenbach's tireless commitment to the scholarly treatment of lucid dreaming launched the *Lucidity Letter*, which from 1981 to 1990 served as the flagship publication for the lucid dream community.

Controversy arose during the late 1980s concerning the potential hazards of lucid dream induction in general, and the pros and cons of controlling one's dreams in particular. Two schools of thought emerged: a group whose members espoused a values-free, experimental approach to lucid dreaming[6] and a group, myself included, that recommended a more cautious approach because of possible psychological hazards,[7] the loss of the dream's clarifying value,[8] and the absence of a sophisticated ethical stance.[9]

The Argument for an "Anything Goes" Approach

The first group operated under the reasonable assumption that the dream was a private, interior, "self-created" experience. They thus believed that the dreamer alone should decide what to do in the confines of the dream state. LaBerge and Rheingold captured the spirit of this approach in their popular book, *Exploring the World of Lucid Dreaming*: "If fully lucid, you would realize that the entire dream world was your own creation, and with this awareness might come an exhilarating feeling of freedom. Nothing external, no laws of society or physics, would constrain your experience, you could do

anything your mind could conceive."[10]

LaBerge and Rheingold were not alone in their enthusiasm for a values-free, experimental orientation. Another lucid dream pioneer, Judith Malamud, urged her psychotherapy clients to treat dreaming as a state that is "totally free and totally safe and therefore permits one to be maximally creative in whatever way one wishes. . . . The dream state can become an arena for trying out or discovering what your inner wishes and fantasies might be. You can sleep with people that it would be totally unacceptable to do that with in waking life, and discover what pleases you in a safe, private environment."[11]

This self-governed, experimental approach has wide appeal for obvious reasons: (1) it offers an avenue into levels of freedom and creativity that is often lacking in ordinary dreams; and (2) it appeals to research-minded individuals who are interested in finding out just what *is* possible in the lucid dream state.

The Argument for Caution

There have also been those who have questioned the wisdom of tampering with the dream's mechanism and content. From a psychodynamic standpoint, this makes sense, because dream content has historically been viewed as a disguised compromise of blatant hedonistic impulses that depends for its expression on a deficiency of ego awareness.[12] While the deficiency theory has since been largely discredited, the idea that the unconscious contains disturbing memories or autonomous forces that threaten to destabilize the ego's integrity is not unique to Freud and his followers. For instance, Jung believed that dreams can depict powerful "complexes" that threaten the ego's one-sided views. He viewed a complex as "a certain psychic situation which is strongly accentuated emotionally and is, moreover, incompatible with the habitual [or one-sided] attitude of consciousness."[13] (A complex develops whenever the ego adopts an untenable, one-sided view and, therefore, threatens to undermine the conscious status quo.)

Jung also argued that each individual's "calling" or individuation urge was to make the unconscious conscious, which on the surface seems to lend support to the quest for greater awareness in the dream.[14] At the same time, Jung observed that the ego's premature incorporation of archetypal forces can inflate and destabilize the ego. Thus, from a variety of psychodynamic

angles, manipulating dream content could feasibly tilt the tenuous balance of power in the psyche toward unconscious domination.

From the East, the Tibetan Buddhist literature on dream yoga, as found in *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*, seems to support both views.[15] On the one hand, the devotee is encouraged to become lucid and to trample upon the images of the dream to assert one's freedom from illusion. On the other hand, in another passage, the same text asserts that lucid dreaming is a form of yoga associated with the accelerated and energetic "path of form," and that to be done safely, it requires the seasoned oversight of a guru.

Still others have argued that lucid dream behavior should come into alignment with the best ethical standards that govern the waking state.[16] After all, lucidity ushers the dreamer into what appears to be real-time, vivid encounters with persons whose ultimate natures—subjective, objective, or some combination thereof—can never be conclusively determined. Even if dream characters are ultimately products of the dreamer's mind, exploiting them could establish untenable, even dangerous precedents for waking-state relationships. While Robert Waggoner's book *Lucid Dreaming: Gateway to the Inner Self* offers a multilevel, integrated view that regards dream characters as existing on a continuum from mere "thought forms" to beings with independent agency, one can argue that in the absence of absolute knowing, one should always treat the dream character as a separate being.[17] I will address this topic more fully later in this chapter.

Controversy Erupts

In the December 1987 issue of *Lucidity Letter*, letters from Jayne Gackenbach and Stephen LaBerge articulated the differences between the two positions on lucid dream induction and dream control. As a backdrop to this dialogue, there had been some reports of dreamers having unsettling experiences in their pursuit of lucidity. In response to these concerns, Gackenbach suggested that lucid dream researchers and authors might, at least, provide information about the potential downside risks of lucidity; readers and participants could then make informed choices. She stated unequivocally, "we are at fault if we do not routinely caution audiences about abuse or even dangers in accessing an incredibly powerful state of mind."[18]

LaBerge disagreed, asserting, "I believe it is premature and inappropriate to 'routinely caution audiences' about supposed 'dangers' that have not yet been convincingly demonstrated. I do not really believe that there is cause for alarm."[19]

In the following issue, several letters from well-known lucid dream authorities continued the debate. I supported Gackenbach's cautious position, saying that frequent lucid dreaming had temporarily corresponded with a destabilization of my emotional and psychological well-being.[20] Trowbridge and Magallon chided Gackenbach and myself for operating "out of fear" and expressed the belief that injecting fear into an otherwise positive pursuit could become self-fulfilling.[21] Bulkeley took the position that LaBerge had failed to take ethics adequately into consideration in his wholesale promotion of lucid dreaming. He argued that LaBerge's ethical stance amounted to nothing more than ethical egoism (i.e., if it *feels* good, then it *is* good).[22] LaBerge's heated response to Bulkeley's assessment left an impact that can still be felt even today, 25 years later, even though Bulkeley later expressed hope that "that such a debate will make positive and constructive contributions to the enterprise in which we are all engaged, namely the exploration of the experience of lucid dreaming."[23] While many of the principals in this debate may have privately resolved their conflicts, I do believe that this controversy represents a clash of paradigms that will continue to raise its head as lucid dreamers favor one of these orientations over the other.

Toward a Solution

I think the only way to resolve this conflict, and to answer the question concerning the issue of dream control, is to examine it in the context of the individual and collective evolution of consciousness. As I argued in my master's thesis, *Lucid Dreaming as an Evolutionary Process*, lucidity can be seen as a more evolved level of self-awareness that represents as much of an advance in the dream state as the modern ego self must have represented in the waking state when it began to emerge thousands of years ago.[24] After all, the lucid dreamer is not only capable of experimenting with alternative responses in the dream, but is also able to access memories and facts usually

not available in ordinary dreams (i.e., "nonsituated" awareness) as well as to pursue presumed higher states of consciousness through meditation and yogic methods. But whether one is talking about the waking state or the dream state, various theorists have argued that further differentiation in consciousness always runs the risk of negating or dissociating from the previous dominant mode of consciousness, as well as from the body and feelings.

Case in point: In *The Next Development in Man*, Whyte argues that a distinctly Western development in consciousness that he calls the "European dissociation" accounts for such collective disasters as the National Socialist movement in Germany. Simply put, the dissociation to which Whyte alludes is the ability to suppress or postpone one's immediate impulses and feelings.[25] Drawing on Whyte's thesis, Wilber traces the damage done in Western culture by the ego's penchant for dissociation of this type, which in its most extreme expression permits an individual to commit cold-blooded murder after being moved to tears by a soaring operatic aria. Taking his lead from Hegel, Wilber suggests that the function of each new level of consciousness is to differentiate itself from the earlier level without dissociating from it, and then to incorporate the old structure of consciousness into a new inclusive whole rather than leaving it behind. This process permits development without reaping the disastrous consequences of the European dissociation.[26]

Other voices of caution have weighed in since this initial clash of positions. Most notably, and relevant to our discussion here, Hurd's *Sleep Paralysis* suggests that there is a correlation between lucidity and a wide range of disturbing phenomena, including sleep paralysis and nightmares.[27] Hurd shows how embracing the challenge of the "lucid nightmare" can lead to deeper and more sublime levels of consciousness, but he is virtually alone today in acknowledging the darker side of lucid dreaming.

In addition to the cautionary perspectives laid out by Jung, Wilber, Tibetan sources, and Hurd, perhaps the greatest evidence that the lucid dreamer should never wholly underestimate the autonomy and power of the dream content, nor endeavor to dissociate from it, can be discerned in the feedback from the dream itself. This was never truer than in my own case.

A Rude Awakening

My initial lucid dreams were simply glorious—full of light and ecstasy. Admittedly, I was less entranced by lucidity per se than by the brilliant light that often appeared to me in the dreamscape, and which I often experienced inwardly as well. I came to see lucidity not as an end in itself, but rather as a platform upon which I could consciously seek the highest experiences available to the dreamer. Reading *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*, I learned that "dream yoga" is considered one of six doctrines of the "path of form," which offers an accelerated avenue into communing with the Light.[28] I also learned in reading *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* that the Light arises in all of its brilliance at the moment of death, but is usually overlooked by the deceased soul, who presumably remains in a nonlucid swoon both during the moment of death and thereafter until the soul reincarnates.[29] The Tibetan texts assert that learning to become conscious and recognize the Light in our dreams is not only an excellent practice for communing with the divine source during our lifetimes, but also the best way to prepare to be awake in the after-death state, thus transcending the need for rebirth.

Upon discovering this connection between dreaming and the afterlife encounter, I set about on a mission—to "pierce the veil" of illusion of my dreams and to commune with the radiance that resided behind the apparent reality of the dream images. However, because some of my early lucid dreams were deeply disturbing, I eventually began to favor a less ambitious, meditative approach to lucid dream induction, realizing that lucidity and the quest for higher consciousness can also awaken unresolved psychodynamic conflicts and powerful archetypal forces. A Jungian analyst voiced this perspective when, after hearing about my ambitious exploits in the lucid state, she said dryly, "I hope you have your circle of fire around you." I thought that she simply did not understand, but I soon discovered that it was I who did not fully understand. A couple of examples should suffice to convey what began to happen.

The first evidence that my quest for the light would awaken deep psychodynamic conflicts occurred in what I have called my "coming-of-age dream." About a week before my 21st birthday, I had the following dream:

I realize that it is time to reveal my purpose in life to my parents. It is just before dawn as I ask them to follow me out onto the driveway of my childhood home. I raise my hands over my head and begin to chant. Lightning arcs across the dark sky, and when I lower my arms, it strikes the ground nearby.

I repeat this gesture several times, becoming lucid as I do, and all the while wondering what is going on! Meanwhile, my parents are cowering behind me, obviously disturbed by the demonstration. Suddenly, my father hurls a lance into my back, and I drop to the ground dying. They bend over me with fear and alarm in their eyes. I say, "I was really your son. But I am the son of the unborn son, who is still to come."

My parents in this dream bore little resemblance to my kind and supportive biological parents. However, whatever the dream parents represented, they clearly overpowered my agenda. Thus I began to consider that lucidity and the quest for the Light could not be pursued independently of acknowledging powerful countervailing forces within me.

Years later, I came to see this dream as describing the inevitable fall from initial spiritual heights articulated in Underhill's classic book *Mysticism*, in which she describes how the newly awakened mystic inevitably falls into psychological turmoil and real-life conflict—an abrupt suspension of the previous spiritual bliss that we have come to know as "the dark night of the soul."[30] While it feels like a curse, Underhill shows that the "dark night" is not only necessary, but eventually facilitates a more stable and complete union.

To understand the divergent positions articulated by the lucid dreaming community in the *Lucidity Letter* exchanges, let us consider a "lucid nightmare" of mine that appeared in *Lucid Dreaming: Dawning of the Clear Light* and was later included in LaBerge and Rheingold's book, *Exploring the World of Lucid Dreaming*.[31] I believe that this dream takes us back to the historic moment in which the two approaches to lucidity were clashing. I will use this lucid nightmare, and two more, to develop my premise—that lucidity as a new level of consciousness confers the capacity to transcend the dream content, but that transcendence is an insufficient solution. Further, an important function of dreaming is the integration of unresolved conflict and emergent potential into an evolving structure of consciousness. Lucidity can facilitate this only through relating to the dream content as a legitimate, independent "other" that is not always, nor necessarily, self-created.

My "lucid nightmare" is as follows:

I am standing in the hallway outside my room. It is night and hence dark where I stand. Dad

comes in the front door. I tell him that I am there so as not to frighten him or provoke an attack. I am afraid for no apparent reason. I look outside through the door and see a dark figure which appears to be a large animal. I point at it in fear. The animal, which is a huge black panther, comes through the doorway. I reach out to it with both hands, extremely afraid. Placing my hands on its head, I say, "You're only a dream." But I am half pleading in my statement and cannot dispel my fear . . . [32]

In my support of Gackenbach's letter to the *Lucidity Letter* readers, I concluded that "even lucidity can prove inadequate to cope with the encounter with threatening dream content."[33]

I discovered later that LaBerge and Rheingold quoted this dream, but argued a different point. They said:

> Here the dreamer uses his lucidity to try to make his frightful image disappear. There is little difference between this and running from dream monsters. If, upon reflection, Sparrow had recognized that a dream panther could not have hurt him, the thought alone should've dissipated his anxiety. Fear is your worst enemy in dreams; if allowed to persist it will grow stronger and your self-confidence will diminish.[34]

A careful study of dreams will quickly confirm LaBerge and Rheingold's contention that fear in a dream tends to escalate the perceived threat, making it more difficult to exercise creative responses. However, the position from which they were operating in their assessment—that fear is unwarranted because it is "just a dream"—is an unsupported premise. Just because an experience occurs in the confines of sleep does not mean that it is harmless. Rather than discounting the dreamer's sense of alarm, one might say instead that the dreamer encountered something that seemed more powerful than he was, at least in that moment. Holding this view of the dreamer's reaction respects the dreamer's phenomenological experience and acknowledges the limits to our knowledge even as we may try to counsel a less fearful and more inquiring response. More importantly, accepting the independent agency of the dream content eventually forces the dreamer to enter into reciprocal exchanges with an inherently mysterious other, which Tarnas asserts is the prerequisite for a true relationship.[35] (We do not see this process unfolding in this particular dream, but it will become evident in later examples.)

It might seem that I am denigrating the position that LaBerge has taken,[36] but actually I was initially in the same camp. We were both on a transcendent quest. While LaBerge was extolling the virtues of lucidity as a means to achieve greater creativity and freedom, I was more intrigued by lucidity as a

means to access the experience of ecstasy and radiance in the lucid dream state. Regardless of our different goals, both of us were minimizing the intrinsic value and independent agency, at least functionally, of the dream content.

Before I share another lucid nightmare, it is important to consider the possibility that fear may serve to "re-tether" emergent dream ego awareness to the emotions and to the instincts, and to offset any tendency toward Whyte's "European dissociation."[37] Indeed, it is conceivable that the nightmare serves to keep the dream ego from "colonizing" the dream state.[38] From another angle, McNamara and Szent-Imrey argue in their "costly signaling" theory that distressing dreams—when shared—serve to communicate a member's vulnerability to the community, thereby making the member more approachable to those who might otherwise distance themselves from potentially threatening members.[39] Thus, from various theoretical perspectives, fear of the dream may have its benefits.

Let us look at another lucid nightmare that a 40-year-old man shared with me, which develops much further than my panther dream.

> I am in a cabin alone, and the door opens. Three figures enter and stand abreast just inside the doorway: Dracula, Werewolf, and Frankenstein. I am alarmed, but the strangeness of event convinces me that I must be dreaming. Realizing that they are only a dream, and that I can make them go away, I say, "You are only a dream. Go away!" They disappear immediately. Alone again, I think to myself, "Maybe I should have surrounded myself with light instead." So I call out to them to return. The door opens again, and they come back in. I say to myself, "I surround myself with light." Instantly, a pinkish white glow envelops me. As for the figures, I can barely see them through the bright haze. Then I think, "Maybe I should invite them into the light." So I say, "Please come into the light." As they walk forward, the light fills me, and I experience an overwhelming sense of ecstatic love. Following the dream, I remained in a blissful state for several days.

In this remarkable dream, we can see that the alarmed dreamer was immediately prompted to use his lucidity to dismiss the unwanted dream characters. The ethical stance of this dreamer basically reflects an ethical egoistic position (i.e., if it *feels* bad, then it *is* bad).[40] Operating from a survival mode, the dreamer reacted as I had reacted toward the panther, but unlike me, he was successful in dismissing the three figures.

The dreamer does not stop there. The successful exercise of power over the imagery gives way to a new consideration—finding a way to coexist with the dream figures by establishing a protective boundary between himself and

the original threat. One can argue that this second solution would not have been possible if the dreamer had held to the original notion that the images were "just a dream." Indeed, it appears that the dreamer actually passed through several stages in his relationship with the nightmarish characters: he first had to become aware of them, then alarmed by them, then capable of dismissing them, then willing to coexist with them. Finally, he welcomed them into his personal space.

This developmental sequence may be the key to reconciling the pro-control and anti-control perspectives. That is, they are both "correct" at different stages of the dream ego's development toward integrating the dream content.

Dreaming as a Developmental Process

Rossi was the first to describe this developmental sequence for integrating dream content. From his perspective, a dreamer must first become aware of the disparate elements within the psyche.[41] This creates an initial crisis and a veritable birth in consciousness. After trying to elude the perceived threat, the dreamer eventually gains power over the dream characters and defeats them before finally pursuing dialogue and integration. As a psychotherapist, I frequently celebrate a dreamer's capacity to fight back and to defeat a dream character, especially when I am aware that the dreamer has suffered significant relational trauma. I know that, in due time, if a client is supported in exercising power, he or she will shift toward more creative responses, eventually adopting a conciliatory position.

Most victims of trauma try to suppress the memory of the original events, forestalling the process of integration. According to Rossi's continuum of development, victims of trauma who are arrested in their healing process are still trying to elude the threat and have not progressed to the point of gaining power in relation to the original incident. In spite of the waking self's efforts to avoid further recollection, the autonomous dream mechanism seems intent on reproducing the original traumatic memory, thereby establishing a "bidirectional response" to trauma, as noted by Punamaki.[42] Various cognitive interventions have been developed to attenuate the distressing nightmares associated with PTSD, including the imagery rehearsal technique

(IRT), which involves having trauma victims imagine a more desirable ending to PTSD-related distressing dreams.[43] IRT thus represents a waking-state version of dream content manipulation that has obvious therapeutic benefit.

Embracing a development model such as that suggested by Rossi casts a different light on the debate of whether one should control one's dreams, and it would explain the efficacy of IRT as a stage-specific, developmentally appropriate response.[44] Given this framework, instead of answering "yes" or "no" to the question of whether one should try to control one's dreams, one would instead ask, "Where is this individual in the developmental process of moving toward healing and integration?" If the dreamer is arrested in his or her resolution of unfinished business or, conversely, is resisting the positive potentials within the psyche and exhibiting a chronic, contextually inappropriate response to the dream content, then we might feel concern regardless of the response. I have argued elsewhere that any chronic behavior in the dream becomes problematic and that to arrive at a useful assessment of a given response, one must take the time to explore the dreamer's psychological and relational history.[45]

Acknowledging the Independent Status of the Dream Characters

Regardless of whether a dream behavior is "developmental," one thing becomes clear: the compelling "otherness" of the dream imagery facilitates, rather than impedes, the developmental process. Regarding the previously mentioned dream, the dreamer's decision to invite the threatening figures back and to erect a boundary between them is predicated on the implicit assumption that the dream images are imbued with independent power and agency. It is clear that the dreamer believes this new "solution" permits coexistence with the threat, as a new way of relating to powerful and unknown entities.

Then, the dreamer goes even further: by inviting the characters to come into the light with him, the dreamer affirms that they are not just powerful, but also possess something of intrinsic value. One can detect a sense of

compassion for the figures that had been previously overshadowed by the dreamer's initial alarm and urge to defeat them.

The intriguing change in the dreamer's stance toward the dream characters—from a summary dismissal of them to a willingness to welcome them—did not come all at once. Rather, it emerged in stages, all of which were founded on the dreamer's belief in the independent power and agency of the dream figures. Far from dissociating from the dream content, this respect for the compelling otherness of the dream characters kept the dreamer from dismissing them entirely, even if they were briefly invisible to him. Thus, the "realness" of the encounter created the conditions for engaging the dream content through various stages in the process of development.

Let us examine another dream—one of my own—which reveals the exact same progression: from the perception of a real threat, to lucid dismissal, to defensive coexistence, and finally to rapprochement and integration.

After my friend Benny's death in 1973, I began dreaming about him on a regular basis. In every dream, he would appear demonic—intent, it seemed, on hurting me or killing me. I would run from him, and often I would become lucid and try to awaken. I found it difficult to remain awake, as if the dream would pull be back into it. I would finally awaken in terror.

After several such dreams, I finally became lucid:

> *He [Benny] appeared in front of me, holding a knife. He said, devilishly, "I want to show you my new knife." Suddenly, I realized that I was dreaming! I knew what to do then. At least, I thought I did.*
>
> *I said, "You are only a dream. May the light of the Christ surround you." Nothing happened, and Benny crept closer. He was obviously amused by my ineffective tactic. Without wondering how I obtained a knife of my own, I began doing battle with him until I eventually disarmed him—an unlikely outcome, since Benny was much larger and faster than I was in real life.*

Then came the culmination of the dream series. In the final dream with Benny:

> *He had me pinned down, pummeling me with his fists. I knew that he would eventually kill me if I didn't free myself. I managed somehow to free one arm. Instead of hitting him back, however, I reached up and gently stroked his shoulder. Looking back, I don't know why I thought this would do any good. But he stopped hitting me immediately, and he began to cry. His tears fell into my face, and he said, "I only want to be loved."*

Except for when the dreamer briefly attempted to dismiss Benny as

"dead" and, therefore, not real, the developmental process proceeded on the basis of an ordeal between real persons. Significantly, the acceptance of the independent agency and value of the dream character(s) initially presupposes a duality between the dreamer and dream. This problem of dualism can be reconciled, as Jung did, by viewing the "otherness" within a framework of psychological, rather than ontological, dualism. This functional or provisional dualism requires the dreamer to treat the dream characters as one would treat actual persons, thereby supporting reciprocal exchanges that reflect the same relational and ethical considerations that govern waking-state relationships. Even if the perceived independence of the dream characters ultimately proves to be a convenient fiction in some later culminating episode, it nonetheless facilitates the dream ego's movement toward relational competency by avoiding the error and isolation of solipsism and ethical egoism. Indeed, having to consider the dream character's capacity to feel, to love, and to hurt us establishes the dream encounter as a true relationship, furthering the process of personality development in the dream state.[46]

In contrast to this view, the dismissive belief that the dream is "only a dream" hides a pernicious dualism that enshrines the dreamer's ego and devalues everything else. This is an age-old dilemma in various spiritual traditions. When the early Church Fathers were trying to defuse the influence of the gnostics, who viewed the world as illusory or even evil, they accused the gnostics of "blaspheming the creator by disparaging the creation."[47] The gnostics attempted to resolve this problem by concluding that an archon or demiurge, not God, created the world of form. No matter which stance is taken, you can see the problem. If one strives for transcendence, then there is a risk that the phenomenal realm becomes a mere burden or a trap, rather than something from which we can derive benefit. Regardless of the historical context, the form of dualism predicated on dismissing the independent legitimacy of the dream content effectively eliminates an inherently mysterious and animated other to whom the dreamer can and must meaningfully relate. There is no conceivable way to resolve this error, without the autonomy of the dream characters asserting themselves to the point where the dream ego is brought to its knees. Hence the possible "re-tethering" function of the nightmare, bringing dream egos back to their senses.

The Problem with Transcendence

The quest for lucidity, transcendence, the Light, or anything "higher" or "better" inevitably pivots off of what is considered less desirable, invoking a duality that leaves the lower, the forgotten, or the untouchable behind. This, as many teachers have said, is the self-defeating paradox of the spiritual quest: one can never completely arrive if anything is left behind. Treating the dream as self-created also effectively "de-animates" the phenomenal realm, similar to the unanticipated effect of Newton's solving the problem of planetary movement.[48] By reducing the sacred mystery of the wandering stars to mathematics, Newton effectively removed God from the equation. We were suddenly alone in the universe for the first time.

Again, the dream that I shared at the beginning of this chapter contains the whole story in a single sentence: "You must first learn to love the form in order to see the light within it." These words succinctly capture the spirit of what has been called *alchemy* in the West and *tantricism* in the East—that is, the idea that the highest spirit co-inheres with, and animates, all forms.

This non-dualistic position was honored by Jung and his followers, especially in the concept of "shadow work," in which wholeness is accomplished only by understanding and accepting the apparently unredeemable aspects of the self.[49] Jung was not alone in the West in upholding this alchemical view that the highest resides in the lowest.

Rilke espoused a similar view when he stated in many different poems and prose passages the essential value of all that we normally despise:

> . . . we should not only refrain from vilifying and depreciating all that belongs to this our world, but on the contrary, on account of its very preliminary nature which it shares with us, these phenomena and things should be understood and transformed by us . . . Within us alone can this intimate and constant transformation of the visible into the invisible take place.[50]

In Mahayana, this truth is expressed in different ways. We have, for example, the doctrine of the five sheaths, in which the highest spirit is regarded as penetrating outward and downward into the progressively grosser forms of reality, leaving nothing beyond its reach.[51] The Psalmist's exclamation, "Lo, though I make my bed in hell, behold, thou are there," expresses this inclusive philosophy in a form that poetically compels assent, even though it challenges the foundation of much of what is propounded by

conventional Western religion.[52]

One of the most sophisticated and refined expressions of this philosophy, through which one might respect the transcendence and creativity of the lucid mind while honoring the value of the phenomenal dream world, is the Mahayana doctrine of emptiness, or non-duality. Simply put, it is based on the principle that because nothing endures, all is empty. Instead of supporting a nihilistic view, however, the doctrine of emptiness inspires the seeker to treat everything as a legitimate path in the grand journey. Ultimately, nirvana (which translates as the "blowing out" of karma or attachment) and its customary antithesis samsara (usually translated as the wandering of the soul in the world of form) are considered as two aspects of this non-dual perspective and, therefore, equally legitimate paths.

Summary

What we arrive at through these various philosophies is a tension between emerging consciousness (e.g., lucidity) and the world of form (e.g., dream content), such that both are regarded as equally valuable and necessary components in an evolving, relational synthesis. As we consider these various expressions of a non-dual perspective, trying to become more lucid or amass more experiences of ecstasy carries the taint of a dualistic perspective that dishonors the ordinary form of our dreams, and of our lives. Rather than trying to accumulate more lucid dreams or more experiences of ecstasy—a pursuit that can further distance us from the presumed lower forms of expression—we might do well within an encompassing non-dual paradigm to concentrate on relating to the particular forms of our dreams with respect and compassion, and to use lucidity as a platform for a dynamic and deepening relationship with everything that is "other" in our lives.

Through this inquiring stance, the spirit that inheres in all forms might be revealed to the dreamer, and the forms that manifest in our dreams can be freed to evolve and transform into more subtle and pristine expressions. Instead of pursuing a transcendent goal, our goal becomes meaningful engagement with the dream as it manifests to us, giving way to a flowering of a myriad of creative forms and possibilities.

If we return to our dream examples, especially the two cases in which the

dreamer progresses through a series of stages toward the integration of the once-abhorrent dream characters by "loving the form" of them, we see a non-dualistic perspective emerging somewhat paradoxically out of an initial stance of treating the dream characters as real and powerful—as worthy adversaries. Such dreams promote an alchemical or tantric view of the dream, in which the forms are seen as imbued with independent agency and power, but offering an avenue through which one might eventually experience ecstasy and integration.

With that in mind, I believe that this non-dualistic paradigm is not only a theoretical stance that can resolve an age-old conflict, but also a highly functional model in the dream state. This paradigm:

- Accommodates Rossi's view that the dreamer is involved in a developmental process, in which disparate responses can be viewed as "correct" based on the particular stage of one's development.[53]
- Treats the dream content as having autonomy or independent agency, at least from a provisional perspective, and as inherently mysterious.
- Renders the negative intensity of the dream as purposeful, as a way that the dream provokes the dreaming self into alertness and wakefulness, and re-tethers emergent awareness with the emergent novelty of the dream.
- Supports the analysis of dreams from a relational perspective in which both dreamer and dream evolve in an interactional field toward integration.[54]

For those of us who are psychotherapists, the non-dual model supports an attitude that we can bring to our therapeutic work with dreamers who want our help in understanding their dreams and resolving lifelong wounds. Most of the dreams that I hear from clients are ordinary, unpleasant, nonlucid dreams, but they do contain the seeds of the highest potential.

For example, after I had done dreamwork for several months with a client who had been molested as a child, the client dreamed that she awakened in bed and saw rats dropping onto the bed through holes in the ceiling. Terrified, she got up and ran out of the room, down the hall, and up the stairs. As she approached the top stair, she turned around to see if the rats were following

her. One of them was climbing the step just below her. She looked at it closely and was suddenly intrigued by the lustrous texture of its fur. Drawn to its beauty, she reached down and touched the fur. At that moment, the rat transformed into a beautiful snow leopard. Startled by the change, the dreamer awakened with a sense of profound peace and—in time—a deeper acceptance of her own sexuality. The dreamer was immediately able to see that her response was critical in facilitating the transformation of the dream content. By teaching clients to alter their responses to the denizens of their dream in contextually appropriate ways, we can assist them in accelerating the process of healing and integration.

In conclusion, we can see that the debate that arose in the lucid dream community in the 1980s pitted two valuable, but arguably incomplete positions against each other. If we now frame the conflict as containing the seeds of a non-dual perspective, in which the opposing arguments are equally valuable positions in the process of engaging the phenomenal reality of the dream, then we may create a bigger tent for the lucid dream community—one that accommodates those who aspire to greater heights of freedom and creativity as well as those who are concerned about the potential abuse of the dream and the psychological destabilization of the dreamer. By introducing a developmental framework, we can affirm either perspective as needed, depending on the developmental needs of the dreamer.

This conversation is evident at the lowest and highest reaches of our evolutionary path. At the dawn of consciousness and thereafter, the self rose to greater and greater heights at the risk of dissociating from the body and relationships. Dreams may have effectively re-tethered the liberated mind to the world of form. At the highest reaches, the quest for transcendence and enlightenment is counterbalanced by a need to incarnate fully and to participate in a relational, transformative process.

As for the ultimate answer to the question of whether we should endeavor to control our dreams or to pursue lucidity as an end in itself, I believe that a willingness to surrender our preferred orientation lies at the end of the ego's quest and at the beginning of the soul's authentic journey. In the spirit of the dream woman's message, "You must first learn to love the form before you can see the light within it," one might argue that one can never love the form until one can feel the light within it. I am reminded of a dream that I once had in which my lover and I both aspired to reach heaven. She elected to meditate as a way to transcend the attachment to this world. I, in turn, decided to reach

heaven by embarking on a journey through a dark wooded area. I playfully wagered that I would reach heaven before she did and greet her upon her arrival.

Some of us are drawn to the path of transcendence; those individuals regard lucid dreaming as a way to rise above the illusion and turmoil of our lives. Others plunge, lucid or otherwise, into the challenges that arise in the unpredictable, soulful realm of the dream. Along the way, perhaps, we may discover that we need both paths—that the lover who espouses transcendence is merely our other half who keeps us from losing our way, and the partner who prefers the wooded path is the one who keeps passion and compassion alive within us. In the final analysis, I believe that Patricia Garfield puts it best when she says:

> Many of us, I believe, can benefit from controlling our dreams from time to time. We can confront and conquer our enemies, negotiate with them, befriend them. We can question dream characters. You know, we don't always have to tell them what to do. We can ask them, we can embrace them, we can love them.[55]

Notes

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8. Walter Bonime et al., "Panel Discussion: Should You Control Your Dreams?" *Lucidity Letter* 9, no. 2 (1990).
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33. Ibid.
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Lucid Dreaming

New Perspectives on Consciousness in Sleep

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AN IMPRINT OF ABC-CLIO, LLC
Santa Barbara, California • Denver, Colorado • Oxford, England

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Lucid dreaming : new perspectives on consciousness in sleep / Ryan Hurd and Kelly Bulkeley, editors ; foreword by Stephen LaBerge.

volumes cm. — (Practical and applied psychology)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Contents: volume 1. Science, psychology, and education — volume 2. Religion, creativity, and culture.

ISBN 978–1–4408–2947–5 (hardback) — ISBN 978–1–4408–2948–2 (ebook) 1. Lucid dreams. 2. Consciousness. 3. Dreams. 4. Sleep. I. Hurd, Ryan, 1975– II. Bulkeley, Kelly, 1962–

BF1099.L82L83 2014

154.6′3—dc23 2014000576

ISBN: 978–1–4408–2947–5
EISBN: 978–1–4408–2948–2

18 17 16 15 14 1 2 3 4 5

This book is also available on the World Wide Web as an eBook.
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Praeger
An Imprint of ABC-CLIO, LLC

ABC-CLIO, LLC
130 Cremona Drive, P.O. Box 1911
Santa Barbara, California 93116-1911

This book is printed on acid-free paper

Manufactured in the United States of America

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1

Tibetan Buddhist Dream Yoga and the Limits of Western Psychology

Eleanor Rosch

> "Look to your experience in sleep to discover whether or not you are truly awake."[1]

The Buddha has been called both The Awakened One and The Enlightened One, and both of these qualities are evoked by the word *lucid* in the way that we now use it to refer to lucid dreaming. However, the uses to which lucidity in dreams has been put by the West are limited and relatively superficial compared to lucidity in dreams, dreamless sleep, daily life, and even death in the practices of Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism. As the Tibetan teacher Tendzin Wangyal puts it, "Dream practice is not just for personal growth or to generate interesting experiences. It is part of the spiritual path and its results should affect all aspects of life by changing the practitioner's identity, and the relationship between the practitioner and the world."[2] What does that mean? How can it be accomplished? And which implications might these practices have for our psychology and for Western science more generally? In this chapter I will address such questions, first by discussing the Buddhist material and then by examining the ways in which the effects of lucidity in Tibetan Buddhist practitioners challenge basic assumptions about bodies and minds in Western science.

These are not merely academic issues. Even in my own meager experiences, lucid dreams have the power to make vividly real—in fact, sear into my mind—teachings previously only glimpsed through a screen of concepts. This is important for people, regardless of what sort of path they may think they are or are not following, because Buddhism specializes in "elephant in the room" teachings—that is, pointers to aspects of everyday experience that haunt people but that, in our usual nonlucid frame of mind, we desperately do not want to recognize. Western dream theories, like Western psychological theories about waking life, tend to focus on the

contents of experience: perceptions, thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Buddhism, in its deeper teachings, reverses the direction of that searchlight to look to the nature of the experience and the experiencer. That is where, according to Tibetan Vajrayana, we find not only our fundamental ignorance and avoidance, but also our potential for transformation. That is what Buddhist sleep and dream practices are about.

Tibetan Buddhist Yogas of Sleep and Dream

General Buddhist Background

Buddhism originated approximately 2,500 years ago, and, during the long arc of its historical development, its teachings and practices evolved. There are presently three major world forms of Buddhism (as generally agreed by both Buddhist practitioners and religious studies scholars): Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana. All of these forms are actively growing in the West. A characteristic of the evolution of Buddhism is that each of the later forms incorporated the basic teachings of the earlier ones, added understandings of its own, and reinterpreted the earlier teachings in light of the additions. It is in the advanced practices of the Tibetan Vajrayana that lucidity in dream and sleep become central, but, as I will try to show, lucidity in the night could equally augment realization for the other forms of Buddhism. It can also be a boon for anyone, spiritually engaged or not, who is willing to turn away from obsession with the contents of experience and look where the finger of lucidity is pointing.

What is meant by lucidity in the Tibetan context? In Western usage, a lucid dream is one in which the dreamer is awake and conscious within the virtual reality of the dream. He knows, “This is a dream. I am dreaming,” while the dream continues. The awareness that it is a dream can last for only a moment (as is usual for excitable beginners) or throughout a lengthy dream with many episodes. Lucid dreams vary in how stable they are, in what and how much the dream self knows, and in how much control the dreamer has over himself and the dream. For the novice Tibetan Buddhist dream practitioner, the same constraints apply, and lucidity simply means being able to wake up in the dream. However, this does not mean being fully awake in

the Tibetan understanding of what that state is. The ultimate purpose of the practice is to enable the practitioner to be awake to the essence and nature of reality whether by night or day, and whether alive or dead. What does that mean?

Tibetan advanced Vajrayana (such as *Mahamudra* and *Dzogchen*)[3] teaches that there is a natural primordial state beyond the mind (not created or fabricated by the mind) that is pure, complete, and all-good. The phenomenal world of experience, both inner and outer, is the radiance of that primordial state. When a person comes to the pure perception (*dag snang*) of himself and the world as that timeless and perfect radiance and can act effortlessly and with integrity from such knowledge, that is the point when he is said to be truly awake. The confused dualistic mind from which we start is blind to that mode of knowing. A person with a confused mind runs in circles during the day destroying himself and his world and at night sleeps "the corpse-like sleep of death." From the point of view of pure perception, the objects and events of both day and night are like dreams: brilliant, vivid, poignant, even sacred, but possessing no inherent nature. That is not to say that they are an illusion; rather, they have a different kind of being than we can grasp with the dualistic sensory surface of our minds. In the words of the meditation teacher and accomplished dream yogi Steven Tainer:

> Lucidity means living from the root of your being. It means not getting sucked into moving to a root that is shallow and stupid. This narrowness and shallowness is an action that we perform. We do it and we can let go of it. In the case of dream, the point is made very clearly. Dream allows you to open up a level of experience not generally available.[4]

This is why in the Vajrayana the use of the dream analogy and training in dreams can be so useful to this path.

If such language looks like mere philosophy or poetry (or nonsense), that is because we have started at the fruition of what should be a long journey, rather than at its beginning. So it is time to backtrack. Conveniently, there is a mode of teaching within the Tibetan Vajrayana called the three-*yana* (three-path) approach in which the development of the mind of the practitioner is said to mirror the historical developmental of Buddhism.[5] Within the Vajrayana, there are also two different approaches to developing lucidity in the night, each suitable for different stages of the three-yana journey. In the approach of strong intention, the practitioner focuses on becoming awake

during his dreams using methods resembling those employed in the West. When somewhat stable in lucidity, he can apply Dharma teachings to his dreams to achieve greater insight. In the yogic approach used in Vajrayana proper, lucidity is accomplished by bringing the mind into the central energy channel of the body, where intention is aided by body positions, guidance of breathing, and/or visualizations. Because the stages of sleep and dream are considered parallel to the stages of death, lucidity practices are also taught as preparation for dying. Using the conceit of a three-yana journey, I will sketch the evolution of Buddhist teachings and show how lucidity applies at different stages.

Early Buddhism

The first word of teaching the Buddha is said to have uttered is *dukkha*, which means "suffering" or "unsatisfactoriness." Suffering is also the first of what are called the Four Noble Truths.[6] It tends to be a mysterious first truth for Westerners given our cultural myth of Struggle, Success, Live Happily Ever After. The iconic image of the youthful Buddha is of someone who had everything anyone could want, yet was still discontent—in fact, so discontent that he felt compelled to leave it all and begin his journey. Here, in classic narrative form, is the first proclamation that the content of one's life and mind is not all that matters.

How can getting everything one wants still be suffering? To see this requires looking closely *into*, as well as *at*, one's experience, neither of which people ordinarily do. This is where meditation enters. In early Buddhism, meditation practices were developed to first calm and stabilize the mind (Sanskrit: *shamatha*); from that platform of "peaceful abiding," one would then be able to direct awareness toward moment-to-moment mental functioning and develop insight into its nature. (Present therapeutic uses of Buddhist-derived meditation techniques in the West rely heavily on calming, not insight.[7]) What were the insights that were to be developed by Buddhism? Some of the first are called the Three Marks of Existence: impermanence, egolessness, and suffering.

Impermanence

We may think we already know about this factor. "You're going to die," say

all religions. Poets sing of it: “kings are forgotten,” “maidens wither,” “the times they are a-changin’.” In Buddhism, such things are called *gross impermanence*. While they are important in arousing motivation to practice (one traditional exercise was contemplation of corpses), insight practices were aimed at a subtler form of perception. Fundamental impermanence, the appreciation of which can change consciousness, was understood to be the moment-to-moment arising and falling, birth and death, of perceptions and thoughts themselves. This *subtle impermanence* is so intimate an aspect of our knowing process that it ordinarily escapes notice. Although the first thing that a new meditator may encounter is a profusion of ever-changing thoughts, that realization is usually interpreted as “I’m doing it wrong” rather than as a discovery.

Enter lucid dreaming. When impermanence is taught as an abstract doctrine, people’s usual reaction is, “Of course; so what!” But when, in a lucid dream, the dreamer realizes that all that detail, color, creative exuberance, and awesomeness of the dream as it unfolds moment by moment are also disappearing even as they come into being and that they will not even be remembered except in the grossest sense, then the literalness of impermanence may start to penetrate. Moreover, having experienced them in a dream, one might look more closely at the waking world of the senses and see these characteristics manifested in that very same way.

A personal experience: I am not a natural lucid dreamer, so I was delighted one night on a retreat to wake up in a dream and remain lucid for more than a few seconds. I was standing on Shattuck Avenue, a main thoroughfare in Berkeley just west of the university campus, and began to peer at the colorful buildings around me with the idea of comparing them to my memories of how that familiar spot looked in real life. With each eye movement I saw something different, something beautiful, haunting, but ungraspable and saddeningly impossible to remember. Giving up, I leapt into the air; so did all the other pedestrians on the street, and we began a dance in flight. When I returned to Berkeley, I visited that spot. After my initial bemusement at how drab it was, I started to peer at the buildings as I had in the dream and was flooded by the wondrousness of ordinary vision so like the use of vision in the lucid dream had been and then by passing glimpses of the beauty of people on the street, earthbound as they and I were in this particular moment. Glimpses of lucidity in dreams and in waking life can reinforce one another, leading to a cycle of increased lucidity.

Egolessness

Buddhism is famous for its doctrine of no self, a concept greeted with paranoia by clinical psychologists and smugness by brain researchers. In fact, the Buddhist idea of egolessness concerns a different dimension of experience than is covered by either of those fields. Buddhist teachings show a clear awareness of the integrity and resilience now attributed to a healthy ego by clinical psychology and discuss these virtues under other names such as wholesome habits and wisdom attributes. Egolessness is also not the same as the constructs that replace the idea of a real self in cognitive science, such as self-schemas, supervisory structures, and brain states. After all, who is it that is blithely discoursing on self-schemas and brain states?

What the early Buddhist teaching of egolessness points toward is the realization that when one closely observes moment-to-moment experience, one's self is seen to not have the solidity and continuity that we imagine. (Spoiler alert: Mahayana and Vajrayana add considerably to this account.) At the same time, this fantasy self can also be clearly seen as the source of one's motivations, emotions, and actions. With further insight, the observant person sees how perception and action based on this self bind one to a false and constricted life based on grasping for what is perceived as good for that self, aggressing against what is perceived as threatening to it, and ignoring what is judged irrelevant.

The form of knowing based on these three tendencies of grasping, aggression, and ignorance is called consciousness (Sanskrit: *vijnana*, Tibetan: *namshe)*. It is in contrast to alternative deeper and more comprehensive forms of knowing that we can call *awareness* (from a path perspective, Sanskrit: *vipashyana*, Tibetan: *lhagthong*; from the more fundamental perspective of non-dual awareness, Sanskrit: *vidya*, Tibetan: *rigpa*). The distinction is important for understanding the Tibetan teachings on lucidity (and everything else). Consciousness is understood to give a false view of reality, a view that leads to suffering. The purpose of lucid dreaming (and the other practices) is to lead the practitioner out of consciousness to the other truer modes of knowing. Since consciousness is built around a mistaken view of one's self, anything that lightens the sense of self is a boon to the path.

Lucid dreaming can do just that. One hallmark of a lucid dream is that the dreamer realizes that his dream self is not his real (i.e., daytime) self. With that knowledge, relaxation can occur. The lucid dreamer can see his dream

self change form. He can see it readily cope with situations that would be nightmares for a nonlucid self. A more advanced lucid dreamer can play with the dream self, changing its body, its environment, and its moods in a flash. The grip of concepts on the dreamer's mind, including concepts about himself, could begin to lighten. All of this can transfer to waking life. As with the teaching of impermanence, experience of the permeability and flexibility of the self in a lucid dream has a personal potency that no amount of deconstruction of the self by philosophical or neurocognitive arguments can match.

Suffering

We all know about disappointment, sickness, tragedy, and the other pains of body and mind, but what close observation of experience by even a partially insightful mind reveals is that in a life fueled by grasping, aggression, and ignorance, there is no contentment. Getting what you want increases, rather than assuages, desire (watch what happens the next time you bite into something delicious); protecting against something feared only increases paranoia; triumphing over a hated enemy feeds further aggression; and ignoring is beset by uneasiness. Struggling to escape one of these painful states of mind either ensnares one further into it or leads to one of the other painful states.

This constant cycling from one mode of being in consciousness to another is called *samsara*, the prison in which most people live their days and that is reproduced in dreams at night. Getting out of the prison requires first seeing the chains of cause and effect (karma; habits) that keep one bound and then acting to break those chains. Close observation reveals why habits are so maddeningly resistant to change—normally by the time one realizes what one is doing (e.g., eating yet another potato chip), the conditions for doing so have already happened unnoticed.[8] When strong intention is combined with close observation, one can catch the process early enough to interrupt automaticity and replace responses known to perpetuate suffering and create obstacles to the path with more beneficial ones.

Lucidity in dreams can augment this process. Lucid dreams can make causality real to people. In waking life, one seldom gets instant feedback about the effects of one's intentions and actions; by comparison, in a lucid dream, the dreamer's mental states as well as overt actions can have a direct

effect on the dream. A feared monster may get bigger, and if the dreamer runs from something frightening, it likely chases her or perhaps she finds she cannot run. A dreamer who single-mindedly wants to win in a tennis match may find his opponent performing superhuman good shots. The dreamer can also see how a change in his intentions or actions might bring other results. He reminds himself that it is a dream and relaxes—and the monster shrinks, the feared person changes or disappears, and the opponent becomes human again. I once realized I was dreaming in the middle of a nightmare of the type I tend to have each year before the first day of fall classes. I was running in a panic, unable to find my class. When lucidity allowed me to pause, I could see that I was so distraught because I really wanted to communicate to the students in that class. Then lo! There I was in a lecture hall before a vast audience of beautifully dressed, attentive (and fragrant) people.

In a lucid dream, a person can relate in new ways to the experience of suffering itself. Normally people do their utmost to avoid this negativity. When the dreamer knows that the nightmare is a dream, however, she can face it. In fact, she could actually be appreciative of the negative, somewhat in the way that we can appreciate drama in a movie, novel, music, or painting. This also can transfer to daily life.

Mahayana

Mahayana Buddhism is estimated to have begun around 2000 years ago in India and eventually spread throughout East Asia. It incorporated the foundational teachings and practices of earlier Buddhism and to them added two new realizations to be discovered by practitioners: emptiness (*shunyata*) and compassion (*karuna*).[9] When Mahayana is taught as part of the three-yana path in Vajrayana, some understanding and experience of these two aspects of Mahayana is considered an indispensable gateway and prerequisite for entering the Vajrayana.

Shunyata

Shunyata is slippery to talk about because it concerns what is beyond our conceptual mind. One traditional way of teaching it is by means of negations; a second way is by analogy to dreams. Objects and people in dreams do not exist in the same way that we take daytime trees and rocks and ourselves to

exist, but neither are dream objects nonexistent. From the three-yana Tibetan perspective, lucid dreaming might serve as a fast track for recognizing some of the insights of shunyata.

1. *The empty aspect of shunyata*. Just as on a movie screen where there is nothing behind the images (no actual prairie, horsemen, or guns), so it is for the images in a dream. A lucid dreamer could be aware of this (but usually is not) even while the dream is playing out and, thus, be ripened for eventual insight into the experiential façade of waking life.
2. *Shunyata as interdependence*. Things do not have a self-nature but arise interdependently with everything else. A lucid dreamer could marvel at the way the setting, occupants, and situation of the dream arise mysteriously and creatively from his own mind at a given instant. This might lead to appreciation in waking life of the vast net of interdependence that constitutes the world.
3. *Shunyata as sudden release*. The moment of realizing you are dreaming might provide this kind of abrupt experience of freedom.
4. *Shunyata as great doubt*. This does not mean a small, worried doubt about a particular thing, but rather doubt of conceptual and emotional constructions as a whole. A contemplative lucid dreamer might practice looking at each thing in the dream (and in life), including the thoughts of his dream ego, asking "Is that really so?"
5. *Shunyata as no-mind or don't-know-mind or completely open mind*. The lucid dreamer might be graced with that sudden glimpse beyond all thought that is said to underlie any experience.

Compassion

That first flash of the open mind of shunyata is also a flash of open heart: compassion, warmth, friendliness, and caring. Shunyata is understood to be inseparable from compassion "like the two wings of a bird." This kind of compassion is called *transcendent* because it is not based on the business-deal mentality of "what will I get out of this," but instead on the wisdom, generated through the open mind of shunyata, of what needs to be done in this moment. In fact, Mahayana practitioners take Bodhisattva vows to be reborn in life after life so as to be of benefit to other sentient beings.

Lucid dreaming can bring direct experience of the effects of generating compassion, even if it is the ordinary self-referential kind. (We have to start somewhere.) When a dreamer who is confronted with something fearsome realizes that he is dreaming, his fear usually lessens or vanishes and, if so inclined, he may be able to generate compassion for his dream enemies. He then gets rapid feedback (as discussed in the section on causality); a feared or attacked monster typically gets nastier, whereas a loved monster may transform into a sad little creature, a friendly monster, prince charming, who knows? Not surprisingly, there is anecdotal evidence of the effectiveness of lucid dreaming in therapy for phobias. Feedback in waking life may not be as rapid or situations as dramatic as in lucid dreams, but who among us has not experienced that after a change of heart toward some intractable seeming situation, such as a job or relationship, the outer situation also changed.

Vajrayana

The Vajrayana (Diamond Vehicle) began circa around 1500 years ago in India. Early forms of it moved into China and Japan, later ones to Tibet.[10] Like Mahayana, Vajrayana incorporates and reinterprets teachings that came before it, adding two basic realizations and a cornucopia of skillful means (i.e., practices) to accomplish these.

Background in Vajrayana

What does Vajrayana add to Mahayana? There is disagreement on this matter, particularly about the meaning of emptiness, among the four main lineages into which the Buddhism of Tibet is organized. Briefly summarized, three of the lineages (Nyingma, Kagyu, and Sakya) hold the *shentong* (other empty) view[11] in which it is the dualistic conceptual mind of samsara with its appearances of self and other that is empty; however, there is another form of knowing beyond that mind that is filled with wisdom. It is through this wisdom that one knows the natural primordial state that is complete and perfect, radiating the phenomenal world of experience. Known with the pure vision of wisdom, the ordinary world of experience—samsara with its grasping, aggression, ignorance, and suffering—is seen to actually consist of the wisdom energies of that radiance.

The other lineage (the Gelug) holds a *rangtong* (self empty) view in

which emptiness of the mind and world is the only absolute truth, and one can speak in positive terms only about compassion. Note that with respect to view, the Gelug order is a Mahayana and not a Vajrayana lineage;[12] however, it draws its practices from the same pool as the other lineages, so in that respect it is like them. For simplicity, I will focus primarily on the teachings and practices that are Vajrayana in view as well as means in the discussion of Vajrayana lucidity.

At this point one might ask: if wisdom knowing beyond the mind of samsara is so good and so potent, why don't people just embrace it without the need for any kind of path at all? In fact, such a mode of knowing—direct and non-dual—is terrifying to ego. Why?

This is an intimate question. We are talking about the relation of the subject and object in personal experience. Usually we are so actively engaged in the activities of life that we lose ourselves in them. This is not direct non-dual knowing, but rather a state of absorption without awareness. The self-observer is there but out of sight, fragmented into a cloud of perceptions, intentions, fantasies, thoughts, emotions, and memories that provide the sense of who one is and what one is about, but do not make one fully present. When that person attempts to stop and look at her experience—say, with some form of mindfulness meditation—the shadow of the ever-present but slippery observer (perhaps a talkative one) comes to the fore, creating another kind of unstable duality that makes it difficult to be aware.

In the wisdom mode of knowing, the mind is neither absorbed nor separated, but simply on the spot. This has been likened to sliding down a razor blade. The bubble of one's life in samsara with all its apparent meanings is popped. People may give up everything for a spiritual path—pleasure, wealth, comfort, fame, relationship, even life itself—as long as they can keep the sense of a witness to it all. The mind touches the non-dual, and it flees. One does not come to any path wanting this; one wants better interior decoration for one's bubble, not its demise. Yet the non-dual is the gateway to the mind that can see the groundless edifice in which humans live as dream, thereby clearing the way for transformative wisdom to manifest. Hence the need for the skillful means aspect of the Vajrayana: teachings, transmissions, and practices such as dream yoga.

The role of the Tibetan Vajrayana teacher (the *lama*) is to act as a conduit for the primordial state and its radiance. The lama gives mind-to-mind

transmissions both of deep and of more specific wisdoms. He directs his students and the communities of students that are practicing under his guidance. Teachings, texts, and *sadhana* practices are also considered conduits—sadhanas are liturgies in which particular wisdom energies are visualized as "deities" with accompanying mantras and *mudras* (i.e., gestures). Working with a Vajrayana teacher requires a bond with that teacher (*samaya*) that involves commitment and should not be undertaken casually.

The practitioner's inner energy body also plays a central role. Advanced sadhana practice and the Vajrayana sleep, dream, and death practices presuppose a yogic view of the body. The body as a solid object with its organs, blood, brain, muscles, skin, and so on—the body that Western medicine, neuroscience, and increasingly psychology take as what is most fundamental—is called the *outer level* or the *gross body*. A yogic view shows the body made instead of subtle patterns of energy.[13] At this *inner level*, we see a body structured around channels (*tsa*) and chakras resembling, but not the same as, the Hindu system. An inner central channel rises straight up in front of the spine, flanked by two side channels. From each chakra on the central channel, networks of increasingly finer subsidiary channels spread throughout the body. Moving through the channels is life energy (*lung*). This system is considered subtler than the medical meridians and chi of Chinese medicine with which Westerners are familiar. From the Tibetan yogic point of view, a wild, disturbed, or deluded mind is the result of life energy racing through the side channels and their branches; thus the mind and its energy need to be brought into the central channel. From there the practitioner can move to the secret level of manifestation at the heart chakra, and from there to realization of the clear light nature of the self-known basic ground of being itself.

Tibetan Lucid Dream Practices

There are two main settings in which the Tibetan yogas of sleep and dream are taught and practiced: the Kagyu lineage and the Nyingma lineage.

Within the Kagyu lineage, sleep and dreaming are considered advanced retreat practices for which much preparation is needed. They are taught as one of the Six Yogas of Naropa,[14] a practice cycle undertaken toward the end

of the traditional three-year retreat. Preparation includes not only a firm grounding in the realizations discussed as part of early Buddhism and Mahayana, a commitment to one's Vajrayana teacher, and completion of the traditional Vajrayana *ngondro* (preliminary) and sadhana practices, but also a set of strenuous yogic physical preliminaries to prepare the body properly. Only then can the practitioner begin the first of the Six Yogas of Naropa, which is tummo, the inner heat practice, done to purify past karmic habits.[15] The second of the Yogas of Naropa is the practice of the Illusory Body; here, with the body-mind now cleared of major obstructions, the practitioner aims for realization that his gross body is not real in the way his gross senses take it to be. After that, he can begin lucid sleep and dream practice in earnest. The primary technique for generating lucidity is falling asleep with one's mind resting on the appropriate seed syllables in the chakras of the central channel. For the non-dual mind of the central channel, lucid awareness both in dreamless sleep and in dreams is natural; which of these is first evoked will be guided by the location (chakra) in the central channel on which the practitioner focuses. The final result would be realization of the clear light nature of one's being during both night and day.

The Nyingma lineage is more relaxed about giving transmissions of awakened states, and teaches lucidity practices to students earlier in their paths.[16] These practices can be done in ordinary life, although retreats are also helpful. During the day the student is instructed to stay present, focusing on the dreamlike quality of experience. It is interesting to compare this practice with Stephen LaBerge's treatment of daytime observations.[17] In the LaBerge system, you ask yourself, "Am I dreaming?" to observe and contrast the daytime evidence that you are *not* dreaming with actual dreams—for example, clocks, printed material, and gravity behave differently in dreams. In the Tibetan practice, the point is to arouse the student's nascent intuition that ordinary daytime experience, fleeting and insubstantial even if vivid, *is* a dream, or at least dreamlike. At night visualization of seed syllables and symbols in the chakras provides the power. The syllable of the primordial ground is a white Tibetan Ah: . Focus on a white Ah in the heart center leads the mind toward lucid dreamless sleep. Focus on a red Ah in the throat center courts lucidity in dreams.

Once somewhat stable in lucidity in dreams, the practitioner is encouraged to play with transforming the dream images. The purpose is to

become master of the dream rather than the dream being master of the person. Vajrayana teachers are well aware that lucid dreams can be as seductive as ordinary nonlucid dreams and that without the insights, commitments, motivations, and tools provided by Dharma practice, even a stable lucid dreamer is likely to use the dream for the goals of samsara—that is, to manipulate the content of his dreams for entertainment or therapy rather than pursue it as an aid in awakening, as is amply illustrated by the lucid dreaming movement. In fact, the reader may have judged this discussion of the Vajrayana section not as sexy as earlier ones because we are no longer dealing with the content of dreams.

The teacher guides the student both in ordinary ways, such as making recommendations of what to do or attend to in a lucid dream, and in more direct ways while the student sleeps. Recommendations might include performing meditation practices, both mental and physical, in the lucid dream state; practicing compassion toward the apparent beings in the dream; noticing the vividness, color, or clarity of perceptual dream objects; or perhaps starting to exercise the student's nascent Vajrayana powers by carrying out Buddha activities in the dream, such as pacifying difficult dream situations or enriching meager ones. Such exercises have particular power, it is believed, because the sleeping mind, while usually even more unaware and deluded than by day (after all, you are asleep), is also potentially closer to one's core nature; thus anything done in a lucid dream can be a potent source of moving one's entire being toward the awake state.

Some teachers also perform direct guidance to the student's mind during sleep. Such mind transmissions are understood to operate through the interdependent nature of the phenomena of the world. Some pathways between interdependent minds, such as those between a Vajrayana teacher and his committed students, become open enough for the student to receive an impetus during sleep that can move him toward greater lucidity and realization. Occasionally a student might receive a prompt toward a specific kind of dream. Realizing that such direct connections exist and are efficacious can be quite startling to Western students (myself included), irrespective of their intellectual belief in interdependence.

Typology of Dreams

The view of interdependence also forms the ground for the Tibetan typology

of dreams. Ordinary Tibetans do not normally engage in lucid dream practices, but they are very interested in dreams, tell their dreams to one another, and are particularly interested in dreams of clarity and prophetic dreams.

There are four types of dreams:

1. *Karmic dreams*. For ordinary people, most dreams arise from life events. Tibetans realize, as do Western dream researchers, that a large proportion of these dreams, particularly those occurring in the early part of the night, are from recent events—in Western dream research, this is called *day residue*.
2. *Dreams of clarity*. These are dreams of something that is real but beyond the dreamer's daylight personal experience. For example, an ordinary person might dream of her child being killed in an automobile accident at the same time that was actually occurring, or a young Tibetan lama might receive teachings and texts in a dream from a teacher he had never met but later discovered actually existed. You can see how connections within an interdependent world could constitute part of an explanation for such dreams.
3. *Prophetic dreams*. Tibetans explain prophecy as follows: if you see an ant scurrying across the surface of a table, you can predict that if the ant does not stop or change direction, it will reach the edge of the table and then have to either go downward or to the right or left. From within the constricted vision and psyche of the ant, however, it does not know that. Ordinary people, living in the cocoon of their imagined selves, are like the ant. But the Mahayana or Vajrayana practitioner, having a wider field of knowing than others, might see clearly in a dream what will happen if a situation continues on its present course. This is not a fatalistic view because that course can be changed. (In the sciences, we do this kind of prediction with probabilistic models.)
4. *Clear light dreams*. These can be accessed only through lucid dreamless sleep, the topic to which we now turn.

Lucid Dreamless Sleep

Lucid dreamless sleep is normally not attempted until the practitioner has gained at least some proficiency in lucid dreaming. The practices to induce

lucidity in dreamless sleep[18] are similar to those of lucid dreaming and basically entail sustaining a lucidity-inducing visualization as one falls asleep. However, here the visualization is in the heart center rather than the throat and may be composed of a progression of images whose purpose is to conduct the practitioner into the sleep state with awareness unbroken. The reason why lucidity in dreamless sleep is difficult is that it requires non-dual awareness. People imagine that being lucid (i.e., knowing one is dreaming) in dreamless sleep would involve oneself as an observer looking at a blank darkness. Meditators have the same fantasy when told to observe "the space between thoughts." Both of these, however, require a different kind of knowing altogether. There is no separate "me" looking into blankness. Lucid dreamless sleep is the sleeping mind knowing itself without content. No amount of yogic instruction can succeed unless the practitioner is willing to let go of her observer and abide in the self-knowing light of her mind. This cannot be faked.

The clear light dream (more properly, the clear light awareness) is the final stage of lucid dream and sleep practice. Here the mind rests as the self-knowing open luminous clear light. The fruition of this is that when experiences with content again spontaneously arise, whether in dreams or waking life, those experiences can be seen as the expression of the clear light ground of being: timeless, pure, complete, and all-good. Or, in the words of the Nyingma master Lochen Dharma Shri, "For ordinary people sleep takes place in the manner of obscuring the mind with darkness. But for those who have apprehended the clear light, like rays of sunlight cast upon a clear sky, all appearances arise in clarity, without conceptualization, joyfully and without clinging."[19] From this state can come powerful skillful actions to benefit the confused world.

Lucid Dying

The stages of dying and traversing the *bardo* (intermediate state) between death and the next rebirth[20] are understood in Tibetan Buddhism to be analogous to the stages of falling asleep, dreaming, and resuming one's life the following day—except that there are more fear and higher stakes involved in the experience of dying. Stages of physical death and rebirth are likewise

considered analogous to the death, transition, and rebirth that we go through in waking life on a moment-to-moment and situation-to-situation basis. It is perhaps because such accounts of death and rebirth find resonance with people's experiences of groundlessness and fear in daily life that the Tibetan view of death has gained best-seller popularity in our culture, irrespective of its consideration as a religious belief.

As someone dies, his senses and the elements of his body are understood to dissolve until, at the moment of death, his mind enters a state analogous to that of dreamless sleep or the split-second space between one thought or perception and the next. For the ordinary person this passes as an instant of unconsciousness, but the person who has practiced constant lucidity in life has the opportunity to recognize this as the clear light and to liberate himself from karmic chains as the clear light nature of his mind joins the mother clear light nature of the ground of reality. If this opportunity is missed, the person enters the *bardo of intrinsic reality*, in which the fundamental energy aspects of his mind manifest forms: first peaceful forms of overwhelming brilliance, then fearsome wrathful forms. This stage is analogous to dreaming or to the sensory perceptions and emotional involvements of waking life. If the practitioner of lucidity can recognize these forms as his own mind, he again has the opportunity to liberate himself and release the energetic patterns of his mind into basic luminosity.

If the opportunity is again missed, the dead person goes on to the *bardo of becoming*, where, blown about helplessly by thoughts and visions and panicked by his groundlessness, he becomes desperate for the solidity afforded by a body and will blindly grab at anything available, however impoverished or hellish. This is analogous to the state of a person waking from sleep whose indistinct feelings and wandering thoughts gradually converge into his habitual attitudes of anger, desire, anxiety, resentment, hope, dullness, longing, resignation, and the rest—a process that falls apart and re-congeals throughout the day.

Does this description of the death journey sound remote and theoretical? I confess it was somewhat that way for me until I saw my root teacher a day after his death. The Tibetan understanding is that in the dying process the subtle energies of the non-dual mind withdraw from the outer body, move into the central channel, and, at the moment of dying, unite at the heart center. For an ordinary person, that process lasts only an instant as he passes into unconscious darkness. However, the mind of a Tibetan high lama will

remain in the heart center in what is called the *death samadhi*. The lama is medically dead: no brain activity, no organ activity. His heart center remains warm, however, and transmissions of enlightened mind states can radiate from him with overwhelming power and clarity. This may continue for days, even weeks or longer. Experiencing such an event is amazing, and it makes it vividly clear how little our science actually knows about either body or mind.

Implications for Western Science

Lucidity practices in Tibetan Buddhism present challenges to many aspects of Western science. I will discuss some of these, beginning with those specific to dreams and sleep and progressing to the more general.

1. *Lucid dreaming and REM sleep*. In contrast to the conclusions from Western dream research that lucidity occurs only during rapid eye movement (REM) sleep (and during the most physiologically active portion of REM at that), the results of Tibetan Buddhist dream and sleep yogas demonstrate that lucidity not only does not require REM sleep but also does not even require dreaming. This challenges the equating of dreaming with REM sleep, a phenomenon that is presently prevalent in psychology and neuroscience.[21] Because lucidity in dreamless sleep is not possible with dualistic consciousness, our psychological and cultural assumptions about consciousness are also challenged.
2. *Implications for sleep disorders*. The Tibetan example could enrich our understanding of sleep disorders. The Tibetan claim is that during deep dreamless sleep, a profoundly positive and transformative awareness (the clear light) is most available to people, but that the ordinary person in his nonlucid "corpse-like sleep" cannot recognize it. However, there may be greater and lesser degrees of permeability to such a positive state in the ordinary sleeping mind. Neuroscience research has shown that during the sleep of normal people, brain activity (as measured by blood flow) diminishes in the areas of the prefrontal cortex used in problem solving and logical thinking; in contrast, in clinically depressed patients, these areas remain highly active.[22] Might some

people be holding on so tightly even in sleep that they cannot benefit from an existence-affirming energy available to them in the night? Given that most forms of mental illness are accompanied by sleep disturbances, this is surely a lead worth exploring.

3. *Implications for mental illness*. Ordinary people, clinicians, patients, and Western psychological theories all focus on the contents of experience: thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Therapies and most other human endeavors are directed toward changing those contents. As we have seen, Buddhism reverses the direction of inquiry to look at the nature of experience and the experiencer instead, and it directs efforts to change one's life and experience toward *how*, rather than *what*, one experiences. There is one clinical application of such a changed focus—mindfulness training; it is generating much interest, and much more could be done towards understanding it.[23]
4. *Different kinds of knowing*. Western psychology assumes that the dualistic mind of the ordinary person is the only form of knowing there is, but the implication of the Tibetan Buddhist material is that there is a deeper, more relaxed, and more expanded form of non-dual awareness that has quite different properties and needs to be studied in its own right. (This distinction could clarify, among other things, ongoing confusions in research on mindfulness.)[24]
5. *Implications for the nature of the body*. What is the body? In Western science, medicine, and popular understanding, we acknowledge only the material "flesh and blood" aspect of the body—the part that, in the Tibetan view (and other Asian medical and yogic systems), is called the gross outer body. In contrast is the inner energy body. Medical and yogic practices that work directly on the inner energy body can have both physical and psychological effects; Tibetan yogic lucidity practices are a striking example. Surely it is time that we take these energy physiologies seriously enough to investigate them.
6. *Implications for the basic nature of the mind*. What is the mind? The prevailing assumption in psychology, cognitive science, and many other fields is that the mind—and hence experience—is just the activity of the brain. Observing changes of blood flow in the brain has become the gold standard and final arbiter for studying anything human. Many of the phenomena involved in Tibetan lucidity practices

(interdependence, mind transmissions, dreams of clarity, prophetic dreams, and the death samadhi) are direct challenges to this view. For example:

A. *Interdependence, mind transmission, and the extended mind*. In the Tibetan Buddhist vision of interdependence, the phenomenal (i.e., able to be experienced) world arises afresh each moment as an interconnected and interdependent whole. Although our minds, at the ordinary level, have their own individual stream of causality, when we relax and expand the mind enough, we can tune into aspects of the world outside of ourselves, picking up subtle present conditions, future probabilities, and perhaps the pathways for transmitting more enlightened energies.

B. *Death samadhi*. In the death samadhi of advanced Tibetan lamas, the deep mind has literally separated from brain and body. Whatever that mind is, it is dwelling at the heart center of what is otherwise an undeniable corpse. It makes itself known by warmth at the heart center and by the profound effects it can have on the minds of living people in its presence. This alone should shake the foundations of our assumptions about minds in psychology.

Implications for the nature of matter. Mind transmission and the Tibetan death samadhi do not stand alone; evidence that at least some aspects of the mind are separable from the brain and, perhaps, the body has been building for many years. Studies and observations related to this topic have recently been catalogued in two judicious, though unfortunately little attended, books.[25] What would unify, make measurable, and give a ground for theoretical explanation of such disparate phenomena would be physics' discovery of a mental field and mental energy particles that allowed the mind in its own right to join the ever-expanding domain of what is considered material. Given that we now have particles without mass, dark energy, bosons of various types, and, at least in theory, vibrating strings of energy that constitute the universe, why not massless *mentons* that operate within a mental energy field?

Final Note

There is a particular appropriateness to having a chapter on lucidity in Tibetan Buddhism in this compendium of work on lucid dreaming. Tibetan Buddhism may have played a significant, though usually unrecognized, role in the birth of lucid dreaming as a field of study in the West. In the early 1970s, Stephen LaBerge attended a workshop on Tibetan Buddhism at the Esalen Institute in California. There the Tibetan lama Tarthang Tulku, newly arrived in America, stood before the class gesturing broadly around the room and repeating, "This . . . dream!" As LaBerge puts it, "Rinpoche[26] managed to get the idea across to us (how, I don't really know, I wouldn't rule out telepathy . . .) that we were to . . . try to maintain unbroken continuity of consciousness between the two states of sleep and waking."[27] LaBerge credits this experience as a seed for development of his own lucid dreaming, which in turn led to his foundational research at Stanford University. Western explorations of lucidity quickly diverged from the Tibetan Buddhist understanding, of course, but with the growing interest in our culture in both contemplative traditions and lucidity in dreams, perhaps it is coming full circle. As I have tried to show in this chapter, return to the source could open new worlds of exploration. May it be so!

Notes

1. Tenzin Wangyal, *Tibetan Yogas of Dream and Sleep* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1998), 22.
2. Ibid., 138. Readers allergic to the word *spiritual* in this passage may substitute *powerful* or *transformative* if that enables them to continue reading with an open mind.
3. Mahamudra (great symbol) practices are considered the culmination of the path in the Kagyu lineage; Dzogchen (complete perfection) is the culmination of the path in the Nyingma lineage. Many Tibetan teachers hold both lineages, and teach students accordingly. For teachings on Mahamudra, for example, see Wangchug Dorje, *The Mahamudra: Eliminating the Darkness of Ignorance* (Dharamsala, India: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1978); Tashi Takpo Namgyal, *Mahamudra: The Quintessence of Mind and Meditation* (Boston: Shambhala,1986). For Dzogchen, see, for example, Eric Pema Kunsang, trans., *Perfect Clarity: A Tibetan Buddhist Anthology of Mahamudra and Dzogchen* (Hong Kong: Ranjung Yeshe, 2012); Namkhai, Norbu, *The Cycle of Day and Night: Where One Proceeds along the Path of the Primordial Yoga*, 2nd ed. (Tarrytown, NY: Station Hill Press, 1984); and Namkhai Norbu and Andriano Clemente, *The Supreme Source: The Kunjed Gyalpo, the Fundamental Tantra of Dzogchen Semde* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1999); For both traditions discussed together, see Dzogchen Ponlop, *Wild Awakening: The Heart of Mahamudra and Dzogchen* (Boston: Shambhala, 2003).
4. Steven Tainer, Talk at the Anvil Retreat Center (Healdsburg, CA: June 17, 1997).
5. Particularly accessible examples of the three-yana approach to teaching can be found in two early books by Chogyam Trungpa: *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* (Boston: Shambhala, 1973)

and *The Myth of Freedom and the Way of Meditation* (Boston: Shambhala, 1976). I have also used this approach in teaching a university class; see Eleanor Rosch, *Buddhist Psychology* [Podcast of course lectures at University of California, Berkeley, Fall 2010]; available on iTunes U: http://itunes.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=391538994.

6. The Theravada Buddhism of Southeast Asia is the only surviving sect of the first 500 years of Buddhism. For more on early Buddhism and modern Theravada. See, for example, Bhadantacariya Buddhaghosa, *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)*, Vol. 2 (Boston: Shambhala, 1976); Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught* (New York: Grove Press, 1959); and Jack Kornfield, *Living Buddhist Masters* (Santa Cruz, CA: Unity Press, 1977).
7. Eleanor Rosch, "The Grinch Who Stole Wisdom," in *The Scientific Study of Personal Wisdom: From Contemplative Traditions to Neuroscience*, ed. Michel Ferrari and Nic M. Weststrate (Amsterdam: Springer, 2012); Eleanor Rosch, "The Emperor's Clothes; A Look Behind the Western Mindfulness Mystique," in *Handbook of Mindfulness and Self Regulation*, eds. Brian Ostafin, Michael Robinson, and Brian Meier (Amsterdam: Springer, forthcoming).
8. The chain of karma/habits is called *pratityasamutpada* (dependent origination), pictured as a wheel (the wheel of life) composed of 12 interdependent links that perpetuate rebirth into samsara moment after moment and life after life. The role of interdependence in making habits resistant to change is perhaps the most readily understandable aspect of this teaching for Westerners. For more on the teaching as a whole, see Lobsang Tharchin, *King Udrayana and the Wheel of Life: The History and Meaning of the Buddhist Teaching of Dependent Origination* (Howell, NJ: Mahayana Sutra and Tantra Press, 1984); Francesca Fremantle, *Luminous Emptiness: Understanding the Tibetan Book of the Dead* (Boston: Shambhala, 2003).
9. For more on Mahayana, see, for example, Shantideva, *The Bodhicaryavatara*, trans. Kate Crosby and Andrew Skilton (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1995); Thich Nhat Hanh, *Being Peace* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1987); Mervyn Sprung, *Lucid Exposition of the Middle Way* (Boulder, CO: Prajna Press, 1979); and Chogyam Trungpa, *Training the Mind and Cultivating Loving-Kindness* (Boston: Shambhala, 1993).
10. For a historical exposition of the roots and development of Tibetan Vajrayana, see David Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: Indian Buddhists and Their Tibetan Successors*, Vol. 2 (Boston: Shambhala, 1987). For Vajrayana itself, see Chogyam Trungpa, *Crazy Wisdom* (Boston: Shambhala, 1991); and the books recommended in notes 3, 5, 11, 13, 14, 16, 19, and 20.
11. For a history and exposition of the shentong/rangtong disagreement, see S. K. Hookham, *The Buddha Within* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1991).
12. It is important to know about this because the head of the Gelug lineage is the Dalai Lama. Westerners generally assume that pronouncements by a Dalai Lama on any topic represent the views of Tibetan Buddhism as a whole, but this is no more the case than that having a Catholic president of the United States would indicate all American Christians are Catholics. The Gelug order was founded in the 14th century as a fundamentalist reform movement in a time of strife. Subsequently it conquered much of Tibet, but it remained in political and doctrinal conflict with the other lineages. The present Dalai Lama is an exemplar of goodwill and compassion who has made great strides in reconciling his lineage with the rest of Tibetans, partly by acknowledging the right of the other lineages to their teachings. However, while he may occasionally speak or write of shentong views as philosophy, he never actually teaches from that perspective. This is also true when he discusses dreaming. (For a clear and succinct statement of the different philosophical positions see, Gyamtso, *Progressive Stages of Meditation on Emptiness*.) Westerners would do well to be alert to these lineage differences so that they can better understand the teachings they have received as practitioners or the effects they are researching as scientists. For a clear and succinct statement of the different philosophical positions, see Tsultrim Gyamtso, *Progressive Stages of Meditation on Emptiness*, trans. Shenpen Hookham (Oxford, UK: Longchen

Foundation); for the Dalai Lama on dreams, see Dalai Lama and Francisco Varela, *Sleeping, Dreaming, and Dying: An Exploration of Consciousness with the Dalai Lama* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1997).

13. For descriptions of the Tibetan yogic inner energy body, see the works cited in notes 14 and 16, and also Tenzin Wangyal, *Awakening the Sacred Body: Tibetan Yogas of Breath and Movement* (New York: Hay House, 2011). For a description of the Tibetan equivalent of Hatha Yoga accompanied by accounts of the rationale for the postures in terms of the energy body, see Namkhai Norbu, *Yantra Yoga: The Tibetan Yoga of Movement* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 2008).
14. C. C. Garma Chang, *Six Yogas of Naropa and Teachings on Mahamudra* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1977) and Mullin, *Six Yogas of Naropa*.
15. The effects of tummo are readily apparent not only to practitioners, but also to outside observers. See Herbert Benson, *Beyond the Relaxation Response* (New York: Times Books, 1984); and W. J. Cromie, "Meditation Changes Temperatures: Mind Controls Body in Extreme Experiments," *Harvard University Gazette*, April 18, 2002.
16. Gyaltrul, *Meditation, Transformation, and Dream Yoga* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1993); Namkhai Norbu, *Dream Yoga and the Practice of Natural Light* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1992); and Tenzin Wangyal, *Tibetan Yogas of Dream and Sleep* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1998). Wangyal is actually a lama in a small fifth lineage called Bon. Bon is the descendent of pre-Buddhist Tibetan religion, but has adopted teachings and practices almost indistinguishable from the Nyingma, while maintaining some shamanic practices from its past. It is only recently, as part of the Dalai Lama's program for unifying Tibetans, that Bon has been given full status as a lineage.
17. Stephen LaBerge and Howard Rheingold, *Exploring the World of Lucid Dreaming* (New York: Ballantine, 1990).
18. See the references in notes 13, 14, and 16.
19. Lochen Shri Dharma, "Releasing Oneself from Essential Delusion," in *Meditation, Transformation, and Dream Yoga*, commentary by Gyaltrul (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1993), 87.
20. For accounts of the death process, see Sogyal, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994); Graham Coleman, Thupten Jinpa, and Gyurme Dorje, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead: First Complete Translation*, trans. Dalai Lama (New York: Penguin, 2007); Tulku Thondrup, *Peaceful Death, Joyful Rebirth: A Tibetan Buddhist Guidebook* (Boston: Shambhala, 2006); and Francesca Fremantle, *Luminous Emptiness: Understanding the Tibetan Book of the Dead* (Boston: Shambhala, 2003).
21. For discussion of this issue, see Eleanor Rosch, *Psychology of Dreams* [Podcast of course lectures at University of California, Berkeley, Fall 2009]; available on iTunes U: http://itunes.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=354824542.
22. Eric Nofzinger, Pierre Maquet, and Michael Thorpy, eds., *Neuroimaging of Sleep and Sleep Disorders* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
23. The most up-to-date and complete coverage can be found in Brian Ostafin, Michael Robinson, and Brian Meier, eds., *Handbook of Mindfulness and Self Regulation* (Amsterdam: Springer, forthcoming).
24. Rosch, "The Emperor's Clothes."
25. Kelly and Kelly, *Irreducible Mind: Toward a Psychology for the 21st Century* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007); and Charles T. Tart, *The End of Materialism: How Evidence of the Paranormal Is Bringing Science and Spirit Together* (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger, 2009).
26. *Rinpoche* is a title; the literal meaning is "precious one." It is used both as a term of reference and as a term of address.
27. LaBerge and Rheingold, *Exploring the World of Lucid Dreaming*, 67. Note that this story and attribution did not appear in LaBerge's earlier book: Stephen LaBerge, *Lucid Dreaming: The*

Power of Being Awake and Aware in Your Dreams (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 1985).

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2

Cultural Contingency and the Varieties of Lucid Dreaming

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Introduction: Culture and Lucid Dreaming

Lucid dreaming is a biological anomaly. It is characterized by a mode of "reflexive awareness" made possible by the activation of brain areas that are responsible for executive control and intentionality, which are normally suppressed when dreaming.[1] Lucid dreaming is therefore a form of consciousness that enables one to become aware of the dream state while dreaming and exercise waking volition. What lucidity means, what it appears to make possible, and what it actually makes possible, however, differ depending on the cultural dream theory (or theories) to which the experiencer subscribes.

In this chapter, we explore how lucid dreaming, its practice, and consequences change depending on the cultural theories of dreaming held both by dreamers and by others seeking to interpret these dreams. This exercise shows that lucid dreaming is profoundly entangled in cultural assumptions that influence both the phenomenal experience of lucid dreaming and the way in which volition is directed in the lucid dream state. We contend that psychological models of lucid dreaming must take into account the cultural variation and contingency of its practice to grasp its basic nature.

Folk paradigms of dream types and uses are specific and unique to every cultural setting. These cultural variants depend on which aspect of the person is thought to experience dreams as well as the ostensible nature, location, and

identity of the persons, places, and things encountered in dreams. Nevertheless, this diversity can be described in terms of six types of cultural dream theories: nonsense, discernment, message, generative, soul travel, and visitation theories.[2] Depending on which of these theories a dreamer applies to a particular dream upon interpretation, the significance of a dream will be quite different.

In nonlucid dreams, one's models of reality, explanatory theories, and other firmly held opinions and values are often deactivated, allowing one's previously rejected attitudes to reemerge.[3] For example, in dreams an apostate can again be a believer and a pacifist can don earlier warlike attitudes. Since waking awareness and interpretation are "turned on" in lucid dreams, the dreamer's cultural dream theory is actively engaged during the dream itself. The implication is that the phenomenal quality and practice of lucid dreaming varies cross-culturally because it depends on the dreamer's cultural dream theory. Moreover, our examination of the ethnographic record indicates that the two components of dream lucidity—being aware that one is dreaming (as culturally defined) and having the ability to exercise waking volition in a dream (also subject to cultural modeling)—need not occur together. Reflexive awareness that one is dreaming need not equal knowledge that the imagery that one experiences is representational rather than a direct encounter with reality. Similarly, the ability to direct aspects of the dream scenario need not be based on reflexive awareness of being in the dream state.

Lucid Dreaming and Volitional Dreaming

Anthropologist C. Jason Throop has proposed three phenomenological aspects of volition or "willing": (1) a sense of "own-ness," described as "a recognition (implicit or explicit) that the act of willing is somehow our own"; (2) anticipation/goal directedness, "the pre-viewing of the act prior to its unfolding or the carrying out of an act in the service of an intended object goal, project or end"; and (3) effortful-ness, "that the act of willing is indeed experienced as an act."[4] As with all things human, these phenomenological aspects of willing are experienced differently in different cultures. Individualistic societies will have a strong sense of own-ness, self-interested

goal directedness, and effortful-ness, whereas communalistic groups such as the Anishinaabe of Manitoba often decenter the agency of the individual from an individual's actions.[5]

Dreaming can, in some cultural configurations, be "the space in which will is most freely expressed."[6] This is especially true of those lucid dreams in which one is not only aware that one is dreaming, but the own-ness, goal directedness, and effortful-ness of waking volition are also transferred into the dream state. For example, in lucid dreams typical of Western cultures, one's actions are considered one's own and the goals sought out are typically in the service of self-interest. In some lucid dreaming narratives collected in a variety of cultural settings, we see the own-ness and goal directedness being interpreted as decentered from the individual and, instead, embodying the will and goals of spiritual others. Furthermore, the effortful-ness of individualistic lucid dreams may be experienced as a strenuous act on the part of the dreamer, but the dreams may seem effortless when they appear to be propelled by the will of more spiritually powerful others.

In any case, when volition is introduced into the dream state, it is no longer bound by physical constraint. In lucid dreams, one can wield superhuman powers through willful concentration. Lucid dreamers can fly, imagine things into existence, and perform feats that require unnatural strength. The imagination is the only limitation of personal agency in lucid dreams. This contrasts with the lack of agency or "duality of agency"[7] that characterizes most nonlucid dreams, in which one rather powerlessly experiences oneself acting in ways that may not conform to waking attitudes and desires.[8]

Where lucid dreaming exists, it is directed toward achieving locally and currently meaningful goals. Goal-oriented lucid dreaming is less focused on being aware of one's state of consciousness in the dream state than it is on the achievement of one's goal or the goal of spiritual others. Knowing that one is dreaming is, in many "lucid dreaming cultures," simply the means by which one is able to remember one's goal and empower oneself to achieve it. In some lucid dreaming practices, such as Tibetan dream yoga, awareness itself is the goal; in others, the goal may be a soul journey, a generative act, or consultation with supernatural agents. This suggests that many cases of possible lucid dreams in the ethnographic literature may be forms of "tacit lucidity," in which lucidity is present but goes unacknowledged because it is

merely the means by which dreamers accomplish goals that they either seek themselves or experience as though they were directed by spiritual others.[9]

In cases where lucidity in the dream state appears to be a tacit feature of an experience directed toward achieving other goals, we apply the term "volitional dreaming." By our definition, in lucid dreams, dreamers have clearly identified their awareness of the dream state (as culturally defined), whereas in volitional dreams, dreamers appear to exercise waking volition but lucidity is a tacit, often unidentified feature of the dream scenario.

While there are plentiful ethnographic references to volitional dreaming in a variety of cultural contexts, the presence and use of lucidity in cultural dream practices in most cases must be inferred from ethnographic descriptions. However, even these inchoate references to lucidity inform us very clearly that both lucid and volitional dreaming are culturally contingent and variable depending on the traditional and innovative cultural beliefs that inform dreamers.

Lucid Dreaming Hidden in the Ethnographic Record

Unfortunately, lucid dreaming has until very recently gone under the radar for ethnographers and other anthropologists. References to lucidity in dreams appear here and there in the ethnographic literature without being referred to as such. It can be difficult to tell for certain whether reported dreams were lucid, volitional, or neither. For example, Barbara Tedlock refers to a dream of a Kwakiutl man of British Columbia who told ethnographer Franz Boas that he dreamed he was asleep.[10] Tedlock interprets this to mean that he had lucid awareness that he was dreaming. She also suggests that feelings of drifting or floating reported from another man's dream indicate that he was experiencing lucidity because these feelings are reportedly common in lucid dreams. While certainly suggestive, dreaming that one is dreaming or floating does not necessarily indicate lucid awareness of one's actual state of mind. Somewhat more convincing is Charles Laughlin's assessment of Laura Graham's description of a South American Xavante elder's dream as having been "obviously lucid considering the extent of focus, clarity of detail, and

working memory involved."[11]

The most reliable reports of lucidity are self-reports, including those of ethnographers being enculturated into their natal or adopted traditions. Some of these accounts point to a special role for lucidity in spiritual practices, including shamanism.[12] After all, to carry out specific plans in a dream that were made while awake, one must endeavor to retain sufficient awareness and agency in the dream to perform the desired actions, be these healing, gaining insight about waking concerns, or perceiving what is happening in another place or time. Such uses imply particular theories of dreaming that regard dreams as not merely imaginary, but "true" in a variety of ways.[13]

Even in very rich ethnographic accounts of cultures of dreaming, the question of whether or not lucidity is practiced remains implicit. In Sylvie Poirier's marvelous ethnography of the Kukatja and related Western Australian Desert Aborigines, for example, we learn that the dream ego *kurrunpa*, which one might translate as "spirit," is indistinguishable from one's dream body.[14] The *kurrunpa* departs through the abdomen into dreams, which are thought to occur in the *Tjukurrpa*, often glossed in English as the "Dreamtime." *Tjukurrpa* is a multifarious concept that simultaneously refers to ancestral law or moral code and supernatural reality that fuses the past, present, and future into an eternal dimension wherein the *kurrunpa* can interact with its "sociocosmic" relations and navigate culturally significant routes on the sentient land.

The *kurrunpa* can acquire information through dreaming via an open and therefore receptive abdomen. People who have an open abdomen are prone to receive knowledge about future events and, if they are able cultivate their openness, gain more volitional control over the actions of their *kurrunpa*, which enables them to diagnose illnesses of ailing community members, enter other people's dreams, and steal another person's knowledge. These purported abilities indicate that the groups Poirier studied have cultivated the ability to exercise volition in dreams. As Poirier remarks:

> [J]ourneys undertaken in a dream can be premeditated. This type of travel in a dream is easily identified because it follows an explicit intention that the dreamer formulates beforehand. . . . Accomplished . . . men and women who have acquired a certain mastery of and intimate relationships with the ancestral realm are capable of guiding their dream travels.[15]

In his ethnography of an Amazonian people, Andrew Gray writes more

definitively about the cultivated practice of volitional dreaming:

> During an Arakmbut dream, the sleeper often plays an active part in the events and can travel outside of his or her body as if in a conscious state. The Arakmbut shamans who have mastered this technique have the capacity to dream at will on any subject they choose, and not only to understand a message, but to participate in a discussion on the issue with the spirits.[16]

Despite this claim of volitional dreaming in everything but name, narrative accounts of such dreams are lacking in Gray's account.

Andrew Lattas's account of Bush Kaliai dreaming in Papua New Guinea implies active, waking agency in dreams, but does not explicitly declare that such dreams are definitely volitional or lucid: "illnesses . . . are cured through dream magic. At night, a shaman's soul (*ano*) will leave his body to search for the lost captured soul of a patient; and the shaman's soul will return, generally, after it has found and reunited the patient's body with its lost soul."[17] One would expect that to undertake such specific, preplanned activities in a dream, one would have to be able to retain volitional control and recall waking desires during the dream.

How Lucid Dreaming Varies Depending on Cultural Dream Theories

In what follows, we review some of the cultural dream theories that human societies have formulated to interpret and navigate in dreams wherein dreamers appear to exercise lucid awareness of the dream state and waking volition, as these are variously defined in particular cultural contexts.

Nonsense Theory: Lucid Dreaming as Fantasy

Nonsense theory regards dreams as having no useful relationship to reality. Theories of this type identify the imaginative powers of a mind or brain as the cause of dreams.[18] Those who consider dreams to be imaginary nonsense experience lucidity as an opportunity to explore a virtual reality world. The apparently random imagery tossed up in nonlucid dreams is frequently considered irrelevant to waking life; however, since lucidity introduces a degree of volitional control, those who subscribe to nonsense theories do not

typically consider lucid dream imagery to be nonsense or useless per se. Rather, they emphasize its value as a means to pursue fantasies of pleasure, excitement, and triumph over adversity.

The most influential "lucid dreaming as fantasy" theory originated from and is still actively promulgated by psychologists specializing in the study of lucid dreaming. In general, it could be said that psychological models of lucid dreaming share two underlying tenets. First is the belief that phenomenal dream experiences are internally generated fantasies that are housed in the brain. Therefore, all techniques to incubate lucid dreams are based on psychological prompting. Second is the pursuance of fantasy. When becoming lucid in a dream, it is considered desirable or at least a common practice to pursue personal fantasies. The content of these fantasies varies depending on local and current cultural ideals. For example, in cultures where such things are desired, on becoming lucid a dreamer may fly to fantastical places, have sex with desired dream figures, or become a superhero and save the galaxy.

After empirically verifying lucid dreaming as a brain state in the sleep lab at Stanford University, psychologist Stephen LaBerge published the first how-to guide on lucid dreaming for a popular audience.[19] The success of this book, entitled *Lucid Dreaming*, led to his co-authorship of *Exploring the World of Lucid Dreaming* with Howard Rheingold.[20] Together, these books outline how to incubate, navigate in, and prolong lucid dreams. Incubation techniques are psychological prompts such as "critical state testing" whereby dreamers routinely test their state of mind to see if they are awake or dreaming.[21] For example, habitually checking one's wristwatch twice in close succession creates a critical state test that will eventually be enacted by one's dream body in a dream. If the time remains the same, one is awake; if it has changed, one may realize that one is dreaming. Another psychological prompt is auto-suggestion.[22] By saying to oneself before going to sleep, "I will recognize I am dreaming while dreaming," most people eventually do achieve lucidity because, as Allan Hobson explains, "by telling myself to be on the lookout for dream bizarreness, I am actively priming my mnemonic neural networks with instructions whose activation may be strong enough to persist or reactivate when REM [rapid eye movement] sleep supervenes."[23] In keeping with nonsense theory, these lucid dream incubation techniques are founded on psychological rather than religious principles.

Advocating the pursuance of fantasy, LaBerge and Rheingold write, "You could, if you choose, revel at a saturnalian festival, soar to the stars or travel to mysterious lands."[24] Flying is one of the most common lucid dreaming activities among Western advocates. Advanced lucid dreamers such as Robert Waggoner have taken numerous interplanetary and interstellar journeys while lucid dreaming.[25] As adherents of nonsense theory, they do not regard these forays as actual journeys, but merely as fantastical explorations of the inner self.

Sex is another popular lucid dreaming activity among Westerners. Patricia Garfield, a scholar and popular author on the topic of dreams, claims that more than half of her lucid dreams are sexual encounters, many of which result in unusually intense orgasms that, upon awakening, leave her "bursting into soul and body shaking explosions."[26] LaBerge and Rheingold share a romantic and fantastical lucid sex dream of a woman from Long Island City, New York. Her dream provides a rich description of the identity of the dream figure and intercourse with him was preceded and succeeded by romantic scenes of horseback riding, walks through flower gardens, deep baths, silk beds, and wine—all of which happen in the French countryside, which, as far as American stereotypes go, is the land of romance as depicted in Harlequin romance novels and films.[27] Green and McCreery share a lucid sex dream of a Western man. His description leaves the identity of the fantasized women obscure and the only scene preceding sex involves the women either being undressed by him or undressing themselves and lying down.[28]

According to LaBerge and Rheingold "lucid dreaming occurs during a highly activated phase of REM sleep" that is associated "with increased vaginal blood flow or penile erections."[29] This physiological occurrence combines "with the fact that lucid dreamers are freed from social restraint . . . to make lucid dream sex a frequent experience." The reason that lucid dreamers who subscribe to nonsense theory so frequently seek out sex is only partially determined by these factors. Of course, the degree and form of social restraints and ideals surrounding sexuality, and the realms people imagine and wish to explore, vary from one culture to another. Moreover, the cultural value that Western lucid dreamers attribute to the pursuance of sexual fantasy in general, and of particular scenarios that conform to Western gendered cultural ideals such as those exemplified in the published examples cited previously, inspire the uses to which they put lucid dreaming. The way

sex is manifested in lucid dream fantasies, therefore, seems to depend on a fusion of gender-specific and personal views of what constitutes fantastical sex.

LaBerge and Rheingold also provide instructions for "how to script your own adventure" where "you are the hero."[30] S. C., an astronomer from El Paso, Texas, shared some of his most interesting lucid dream adventures as the messiah of imagined worlds: "I have saved the Earth from nuclear war, the galaxy from its core exploding, and the universe from final heat death."[31] In a self-published book, Thomas Yuschak explains how he combines *Mucuna pruiens*, a legume containing high levels of L-dopa, a chemical precursor to dopamine that crosses the blood-brain barrier, and galantamine, an acetylcholinestrae inhibitor, to have heroic lucid dreams.[32] According to Yuschak, if a person sleeps four or five hours, takes galantamine, and then returns to sleep, he or she will likely enter a lucid dream, what LaBerge and Rheingold refer to as a "wake-initiated lucid dream,"[33] but with the assistance of natural supplements. Where galantamine is used to trigger lucidity during REM sleep, the L-dopa contained within the *M. pruiens* will influence the dream content as well as enhance the abilities of the lucid dreamer. In his extensive experience, Yuschak has observed a common feature of dopamine dreams is that "the dreamer is put in some kind of threatening situation and must overcome some type of adversary."[34] Dopamine dreams are reportedly "fully participatory" and Yuschak recalls overcoming "vampires, snakes, gun battles, [and] physical attacks" in some of his dopamine dreams.[35] As for the attitude of dreamers within the dream, they experience increased confidence in their ability to overcome adversity and exercise superhuman powers. In this example, the cultural knowledge of neurochemistry combined with a cultural valuation of individual heroism, a cultural repertoire of fairy tale creatures, and technologies combine to produce the pursuit and experience of lucid fantasy dreams that are "nonsense" only in the sense that one is free to live out desired situations that are acknowledged to be both virtual and impossible in waking life.

It is important to recognize that the popular psychological model of lucid dreaming—that it is a venue for sensually rich, realistic, and yet imaginary fantasizing—is fundamentally culture bound. It is but one of numerous forms of lucid dreaming.[36]

Discernment Theory: Lucid Dreaming as Insight

Discernment theory holds that dreaming entails an enhanced capacity for thought and awareness.[37] People who believe dreams enable superior discernment experience lucid dreams as directed searches for deeper understanding in a heightened conscious state. Lucid dreams are, for those holding discernment theories, opportunities to philosophize about the nature and content of reality while dreaming, with the objective of attaining superior awareness or knowledge. Tibetan Buddhists who practice dream yoga, for example, strive to retain lucid awareness throughout alert, meditative, and dreaming states of consciousness, and even beyond the grave.[38] By becoming lucid in dreams, dream yogins hope to be able to perceive the illusory nature of the phenomenal dream self and dream reality so as to understand, in a visceral sense, that the dualism between the dream self and the dream reality is a false mental construct. The resulting insight is that reality and the self are irreducibly interconnected and non-dualistic. This mystical experience and the way it transforms one's perspective is generally referred to in English as "enlightenment," although it is culturally contingent. By achieving enlightenment in the dream state, yogins escape from having to again be reborn into the human world of pain and suffering.[39]

When people believe that lucid dreaming taps into abilities to discern underlying causes of phenomena, it can be practiced in service of therapy. Lucid dream researchers such as LaBerge and Rheingold[40] and Waggoner say that lucid dreaming can improve a person's mental and physical health by enabling one to overcome nightmares and solve other problems that act as stressors in waking life.[41] Lucid dreaming is acknowledged by contemporary psychologists as a method to diffuse nightmares.[42] By becoming lucid, dreamers who subscribe simultaneously to nonsense and discernment theories of dreaming realize that the threatening dream character or situation is illusory and may or may not attempt to consciously manipulate the dream to suit their preference. When the threat dissipates, the anxiety it caused also tends to drift away. Dreamers who are successful in diffusing nightmares often feel triumphant, empowered, and even excited with laughter over what once caused them fear. Such lucid dreaming experiences and their therapeutic effects depend entirely on subjects assuming that dreams are imaginary and that they can inform us about our inner lives.

Message Theory: Lucid Dreaming as Conversation and Interrogation

Message theory explains dreams as communications, in linguistic or imagistic form, between or within minds.[43] People who regard dreams as messages understand lucidity as opportunities to actively question and respond to those one encounters while dreaming. Furthermore, message theorists consider these dream characters to be real personalities who actually send and receive messages. In passive dreams, one lacks the waking power to direct which questions one asks or which information dream beings will provide. For those subscribing to message theory, lucidity means being able to actively engage in a real conversation with a being who can be interrogated.

Dennis Tedlock has called attention to the fact that relative emphasis on auditory versus visual images in dreaming varies cross-culturally.[44] He cites the example of Native North American vision seekers in various tribes who learn to become lucid in visionary dreams by "hearing" a formulaic verbal message rather than by relying on the typical Western practice of using visual cues. The messages these individuals ostensibly receive from spirit helpers, then, are not only relevant to their subsequent waking life, but also alert them to their dreaming state itself. Since the locations for vision quests are carefully chosen, Tedlock reminds us that a significant aspect of lucidity in these cultural contexts is retaining awareness of the sleeping body's position during the dream experience, because it influences what one may experience, including who one may be able to meet, hear, and question.[45]

Some Western lucid dreamers use interrogation in lucid message dreams to achieve what they call "self-integration"—that is, "the synthesis of separate psychological structures into a more comprehensive personality."[46] In Jungian psychology, repressed desires, thoughts, emotions, and aspects of one's personality that a person intentionally or naturally discards do not simply disappear. Rather, they migrate into the unconscious to constitute what C. G. Jung refers to as "the shadow."[47] If a person's ego is conflicted, the shadow may reveal itself in a dream as one or more figures that reflect what the dreamer had repressed or discarded from his personality in waking life. To achieve self-integration, some lucid dreamers seek out and or identify their shadow and then embrace it.[48] Embracing one's shadow aspect and

thereby achieving self-integration is thought to have real therapeutic potential for the dreamer in terms of mental health. Lucidity provides those who consider dreaming to be a means of receiving messages, and those who regard the self as made up of conflicting attitudes, with an opportunity to gain insight into themselves.

Generative Theory: Lucid Dreaming as Magic or Placebo

Generative theory attributes to dreaming minds creative power to prefigure, convey, or make possible events and things in the waking world. For something to exist, according to these theories, it must first have been dreamed.[49] Those who subscribe to generative theory, which holds that dream events cause things to happen in the waking world, see lucidity as a means of engineering physical consequences. For example, the Western Australian Aborigines of Jigalong believe they regenerate animals through coordinating dream spirit journeys to distant ritual sites on the landscape so as to perform needed rituals that ensure the increase of the species for which their Dreamtime myths inform them that they are responsible.[50] The purposefulness and cooperation of multiple people in such dream expeditions suggests communal goal directedness and concerted volition. At the very least, it demonstrates that if some of the peoples at Jigalong achieve lucidity in some of their dreams, they would understand it as providing the opportunity not only to travel in reality rather than in made-up fantasy worlds, but also to actually generate new life.

Exercises of conscious awareness in the dream state for generative purposes have been clearly identified among the Omushkego (Eastern Swampy Cree) who reside in the Western Hudson and James Bay lowlands, as well as among the Rock Cree of northwestern Manitoba, Canada. Louis Bird, a renowned Omushkego storyteller and educator, speaks with clear detail about the traditional dreaming practices of his people.[51] These include soul travel, spiritual visitation, shape shifting, and spirit battles between *mitew* (shamans) in dreams. The underlying theme of these dream activities is the belief that they have real-world consequences.

To become a *mitew*, a person needs to apprentice from an early age—age 5 as the ideal and age 15 at the latest.[52] In the beginning, children's grandfathers would teach them how to dream and be fearless by first letting them sleep by themselves but within the same home. After a year of sleeping

alone, the child would then be sent to sleep in the wilderness with his grandfather until he was comfortable to sleep there alone. According to Bird:

> He must have a minimum of covering, a minimum of comfort so he could condition himself to be half asleep and half awake at the same time. In that state of mind, the dream is actually almost real—and sometimes it can be very terrifying. He had to understand that this was not real, this is a dream. Once he could control that, he could call or command any dream that he wanted.[53]

From the time the skill of lucid dreaming is developed in a young *mitew* onward, he will use it to communicate with animals, especially those he fears the most, such as the polar bear. In Bird's estimation, it takes roughly five years of half-sleep dreaming to summon all of the animals one fears and tame them to be one's allies.[54] The bond between animal and *mitew* could become so close that their identities can become entwined. "In some dreamers' dream quests," explains Bird, "they could turn [themselves] into a bird, any kind that they wish."[55] A dream ally could also be used as a helper. If a *mitew* wished to know something that only a certain kind of animal is thought to know, he would summon that animal and ask it to acquire that information: "Like the hawk, you could use the hawk as your helper and whenever you wanted to see something or to find something, you could ask the hawk in your dream to find it for you."[56]

The allies that a *mitew* acquired could also be sought by sleeping alone in locations associated with that ally. If the youngsters wished the water to be their ally, they might build a nest in a tree near fast-running water so that the sound of the water would help them to dream from a half-sleep state.[57] Alternatively, they might take a canoe out into Hudson or James Bay and anchor themselves for the night so as to "create a dream" about the Bay.[58] On occasion, a *mitew* might exit his home during a thunderstorm and sleep on the ground, in a tree, or in a raised scaffold to dream about the spirit of the thunderstorm.

A *mitew* could direct his soul to leave his body and scout out potential hunting grounds to see if animals are present in particular areas. After extensive practice, the ability to soul travel during dreams would transfer into the ability to soul travel while awake.

Summarizing these dreaming abilities, Bird draws on a model involving three levels of mind power. First is the primary ability to dream; second is the

creative mind of waking life. The third level of mind power is a synthesis of the ability to dream and the creativity of waking volition:

> It is the third level of your mind that you awakened when you slept, when you wanted to dream something, when you wanted to know something. The mind . . . could help you dream about something that you wanted. Another way of saying it is that you could perform a miracle. You could command the elements, you could walk on water, you could even walk on air or travel on air. You could travel instantly in your mind without going there physically. And, with your mind only, you could move things and make other people do things without knowing they were doing them. This is what our ancestors called mitewiwin [shamanic power].[59]

Personally or through an ally, shamans could also engage in activities that are thought to alter the course of reality. They could, according to Bird, solicit the wind, so long as they had tamed it in their dream quest, to cause another person discomfort, injury, or even death.[60] "In their dream vision," for example, "they could use the wind to aggravate another person—a man or a woman or another *mitew* who was bothering them—they could create a small tornado to go and attack that person."[61] Of more deadly consequence were the *mitew* spirit battles in which one *mitew* would create a beast and send it to attack another *mitew*, who then would create a second beast to protect himself. "Only the beasts fight—the two men just sit there with their minds fighting—and whoever is stronger is the winner. And if one of the beasts is killed, the *mitew* dies instantly." A *mitew* could also enter another person's dream to assault him and, it was thought, "Whoever was killed in that dream didn't wake up again."[62]

Robert Brightman observed parallels to psychological notions of lucid dreaming among the Rock Cree of northwestern Manitoba (approximately 500 kilometers west of the Omushkego) but was unable to delve too deeply into how the ability to become lucid in dreams is developed or taught.[63] In his account, Brightman notes that the Rock Cree believe their dreams can cause or determine like events in waking life. As such, they try to exert volitional control over their dreams so that they can dream their desires into waking life. Brightman writes, "Crees say that they attempt to dream about specific objects of desire, maintain consciousness during the transition into sleep, recognize when they are dreaming, and act deliberately within dreams, whether or not the dream is one that they understand themselves deliberately to have cultivated."[64]

Where generative theories of dreaming find purchase, they do more than

simply provide people with a magical means to affect reality. Specifically, volitional dreaming can also be seen as the means by which the world itself was brought into existence, as Watson has documented for the Guajiro of Ecuador.[65]

Soul Travel Theory: Lucid Dreaming as Navigation

Soul travel theory considers the experiences of dreaming to be what an aspect of the dreamer's self perceives while it moves about, usually independently of the sleeping body.[66] Soul travel theorists use volitional dreams as purposeful journeys. In many cultures, the dream ego is thought to be the soul or one of multiple souls. In ethnographic accounts of soul travel in dreams, many narratives appear to involve some degree of lucidity insofar as the dream self appears to act with volition. However, the possible presence of lucidity has been left unverified by many ethnographers.

The Rarámuri of northern Mexico consider dreaming to be a mode of perception and action in physical reality. The ability to exercise volition in vivid dreams is conceptualized as a God-given gift and those possessing this gift are able to navigate willfully to places that the body cannot go. There, they perform feats that the body cannot, such as retrieving lost souls from underworlds (the Rarámuri attribute illness and weakness to soul loss). A Rarámuri doctor explained to Merrill what he has witnessed in his nocturnal ventures to retrieve lost souls from a town that he claims exists below a stream:

> In my dreams I go there to retrieve a soul, a small child perhaps. A water serpent (*walúluwi*) captures the soul and takes it there, putting it inside of a large house. The soul becomes the peon of the water serpent, who sends it out to herd his goats. There are large numbers of goats and cattle there, very beautifully spotted cattle. I have seen all of this in my dreams.[67]

Merrill adds, "I have heard equally elaborate descriptions of inaccessible regions of the universe from people who are not doctors, but the ability to travel to such places at will and retrieve lost souls from them distinguishes doctors from ordinary people."[68] A Rarámuri doctor incubates such dreams after hearing about the symptoms and recent dreams of a patient, when he "concentrates his attention on locating the soul in his dreams on that or subsequent nights."[69]

The Bardi of Western Australia say people vary in their abilities to achieve lucidity and willfully soul travel. "While all dreamers can be 'taken' or transported to other places by spirit beings, by the spirits of deceased persons, and by 'magic' people, ordinary people cannot exert a conscious agency about dream-spirit travel whereas they believe that *jarlngungurr* [who have special powers] can, and do."[70]

Soul travel theory is extremely common cross-culturally.[71] Insofar as lucidity is a tacit feature of soul-travel dreams, we consider them to be more appropriately described as volitional dreams. These experiences are considered to be actual, purposeful journeys by those who embark on them, but are often not described as dreams wherein dreamers are explicitly aware of their state per se.

Visitation Theory: Lucid Dreaming as Supernatural Contact

In theories of this type, dream encounters are considered the result of other spirits traveling to a stationary dreamer.[72] Visitation theorists who become lucid experience themselves as enabled to direct their interaction with the beings that have come to them in their dreams similarly to how they interact with visitors in waking life. Depending on the identity of visitors, they may be rebuffed or welcomed with varying degrees and kinds of interaction and hospitality.

Fritz Meier, in writing of the history of Muslim dream practice, notes that "Dreams too, according to the Islamic ideas, can be prepared," just as one prepares to entice and receive a desired guest.[73] "On the degree of the purity of the dreamer's soul depended, so it was thought, the very quality of the dream."[74] Meier continues:

> When after forty years of nocturnal vigils, the mystic ash-Shāhal-Kirmānī (*ca.* 900) finally fell asleep and saw God in a dream, he asked God why He appeared in a dream after he had sought him so long awake [thus recognizing the dream-state]. God answered, "It is only thanks to your vigil that this fulfillment is granted to you in your dream."[75]

Sometimes lucidity is achieved among visitation theorists when the visitor informs the dreamer that he or she is dreaming, as in the case of the Roman Gennadius's dream of a youth who likened life after death to dreaming. As recounted by Saint Augustine and quoted by Robert Van de

Castle, the dream character came to the dreamer and said:

> Asleep and lying on your bed, these eyes of your body are now unemployed and doing nothing. And yet you have eyes with which you behold me, and enjoy this vision, so, after your death, while your bodily eyes shall be wholly inactive, there shall be in you a life by which you shall still live.[76]

Another example of an apparently lucid dream interpreted as a visitational exchange is quoted from the Lakota elder, Black Elk. His awareness of his bodily position and his recognition of the visitors from previous visions seem to indicate lucidity:

> As I lay in the tipi, I could see through the tipi the same two men whom I saw before and they were coming from the clouds. Then I recognized them as the same men I had seen before in my first vision. They came and stood off a ways from me and stopped, saying: "Hurry up, your grandfather is calling you." When they started back, I got up and started to follow them.[77]

In this dream the visitors come to Black Elk to fetch him away. It should be recalled that because he held a cultural theory that such dreams are actual spiritual visitations, he experienced this as a real visit and a real journey, despite his apparent awareness that it was a dream-vision. This brings us full circle to the thesis of this chapter—what lucid dreaming is, means, and seems to make possible depends on which cultural dream theories the dreamer holds.

Conclusion

Neither lucid nor volitional dreaming is universally known or practiced. Nevertheless, the ability to act with waking volition and the ability to be aware that one is dreaming are potentials that are more or less shared by all humans because of their biological bases. Lucid dreaming is made possible, as Allan Hobson hypothesizes, by "engaging [one's] frontal cortex to call for chemical help. [One's] brain stem responds by sending up some norepinephrine—just enough to place [one] on the knife's edge between REM sleep and waking."[78] In a related vein, Charles D. Laughlin, who regards the engagement of the prefrontal cortex as central in determining how experience is organized, has argued that "prefrontal cortical involvement is

heavily influenced by enculturation, socialization, and psychological development." Therefore, he concludes, "the role of culture in preparing a society's members for lucidity or the lack of it in dreams . . . is paramount."[79]

To use Michael Winkelman's terminology, lucid and volitional dreams are based on one or more biological "modes" of consciousness.[80] These modes are experienced and used differently depending on cultural beliefs about awareness and agency. Winkelman terms culturally posited forms of awareness as "states" of consciousness, which do not map neatly onto biological "modes" of consciousness.

To engage executive control when on verge of waking is a volitional act. This, together with the fact that lucid dreaming is a skill that normally must be learned, the form of which depends on the particular cultural dream theories held by each lucid dreamer within his or her sociocultural context, suggests that lucid dreaming is not a single, biological *mode* of consciousness. Rather, it is a group of culturally determined *states* of consciousness. Lucidity is at its very foundations a cultural construction of a biological potential, in the same way that sleep paralysis experiences have been demonstrated to be culturally contingent.[81] As a technical term, *lucid dreaming* is a shorthand to describe many different culturally constructed ways of being aware that one is "dreaming" while asleep. To supplement this definition, we have proposed *volitional dreaming* as a useful term to describe dreams in which lucidity is a tacit feature of a goal-oriented sleep experience that is undertaken with volitional control retained from the waking state.

We need to recognize that since not all humans experience dreams as hallucinations, being lucid in a dream cannot be universally equated with an opportunity to fantasize in a safe, virtual playground. Definitions of lucid dreaming requiring a dreamer to realize that "all of the elements of the ongoing dream, including the dream-self [are] completely hallucinatory and [bear] no causal relationship whatsoever to the external waking world" are inherently ethnocentric.[82] From a scientific perspective, they are inaccurate because they claim that the dreamer must subscribe to a particular cultural theory of dreaming, which happens to match the "nonsense" theory of materialist science, for a dream to be regarded as "lucid." As the cases presented here demonstrate, just because one recognizes that one is "dreaming" does not mean that one understands dreaming to be hallucinatory: it might be considered "what the soul sees as it travels outside

the body," "an effective magical act," or a variety of other ostensible phenomena.

Overall, lucidity has been a tacit or neglected topic of ethnographic research until very recently. One reason for this lack of attention is that the concept of lucid dreaming has not long been in the anthropological vocabulary; that which is not recognized is not sought. Another reason is that such abilities are not always widely distributed or known in the world's societies. Moreover, when volitional or lucid dreaming practices do exist in a community, they are often guarded as special skills that can be dangerous in untrained hands. As Katie Glaskin notes regarding her studies of Bardi dreaming, "Specific questions about dreams, in subsequent research much later on, led persons to direct me, by and large, towards those persons considered to have special powers, and led to particular discussions about the 'intentionality' and potency of dreaming, including lucid dreaming, that were less evident in previous research."[83]

There are, no doubt, hundreds of distinct and partially intertwined cultural worlds of lucid and volitional dreaming out there, hidden below the surface in the many societies that have already been studied, as well as those that have not. Their secrets await discovery by persistent and caring ethnographers, guided by a scientific understanding of lucid dreaming that is vigilant against ethnocentrism as well as a respectful willingness to enter other cultural worlds to share their experience.

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3

Magic, Meditation, and the Void: Creative Dimensions of Lucid Dreaming

Clare R. Johnson

> The act of lucid dreaming takes you to another space, another reality, where there is freedom to create what you want—and in a dream state it is much easier to accomplish than when facing a keyboard and screen.[1]

Lucid dreams are dreams in which we know we are dreaming.[2] It is a strange thing that although Eastern spiritual traditions such as Tibetan Buddhism have a long history of working with lucid dreaming and many Westerners have had spontaneous lucid dreams from childhood, we have been slow off the mark to accept and welcome them. My PhD explored the link between lucid dreaming and the creative writing process. I've never experienced such an audience eruption after one of my research presentations as at the 2005 Dream Writing conference in Kent, England. As soon as I finished speaking, I was bombarded with questions from audience members who found my statement utterly preposterous that I was "researching my PhD topic while asleep, in my lucid dreams." These skeptics were psychoanalysts and psychotherapists who were not convinced that lucid dreaming was even possible, so they were not open to hearing a PhD student extolling its creative and therapeutic potential.

In the ensuing debate, I explained British parapsychologist Dr. Keith Hearne's pioneering experiment of April 12, 1975, in which his subject, Alan Worsley, became the first person to successfully send a deliberate message—in the form of ocular signals recorded on a polygraph machine—from a lucid dream. This experiment, the results of which were published in 1978,[3] provided the first scientifically accepted evidence that people can "wake up" inside a dream. But it was only when I asked the audience to raise their hands if they had ever been aware that they were dreaming that the skeptics calmed down somewhat—because fully half of the hands in the room shot up. Still, I

was amazed to discover that lucid dreaming was being ignored or disregarded even among professionals who worked with dreams on a daily basis. Times are changing and now lucid dreaming is a hot topic in the West as people become aware of its potential in many areas, such as nightmare treatment, physical and psychological healing, problem solving, psycho-spiritual transformation, skill learning, parasomnias, consciousness studies, and more. This chapter focuses on the creative potential of lucid dreaming.

Since Sigmund Freud[4] brought dreams into the mainstream, Westerners have become more aware of the therapeutic and message-bearing properties of dreams. As public interest in dreams has grown, so has the amount of literature on the strong link between dreams and creativity.[5] Creativity is often defined as the expression of original thoughts, images, and insights, and it involves the act of bringing something new into existence.[6] This "something new" can be anything from ideas and ideologies to scientific discoveries, art, or a new way of solving a problem. Creativity is also imaginative freedom, a stretching of the psychological, philosophical, and cultural boundaries to which our minds usually adhere. People talk of "thinking outside the box" and "leaps of creative genius." Creativity in its purest sense means going beyond what has come before, shrugging off preconceptions and leaping bravely into the unknown.

The dreaming mind could itself be considered to be a type of creative genius, with its spontaneous manifestation of imagery and its tendencies to original analogies.[7] In a time when artists speak openly about their creative process, we are familiar with stories of dream-inspired art and inventions that developed from dream states: August Kekulé discovered the ring-like molecular structure of benzene in hypnogogic imagery of a snake biting its tail; Paul McCartney dreamed the tune to *Yesterday*; Robert Louis Stevenson described himself as "consciously making stories . . . whether awake or asleep,"[8] and when he recognized while dreaming that he had invented a good story, he would deliberately wake himself up to record it.

Why *Lucid* Dreams?

If creative inspiration happens in both lucid and nonlucid dream states, what advantages could lucid dreaming realistically have in this area? While I am

the first to acknowledge that my nonlucid dreams have often been a source of artistic creativity, my 2007 doctoral research and its refinement in ensuing years have identified some exceptional qualities of lucid dreaming in the creative process. These can be summed up as rational thought, ability to recall preset tasks, heightened perception, conscious attention, detailed dream recall, dream control, lucid suspension or the "void", meditative states, and non-dual states. This chapter examines these qualities from a creativity perspective, with emphasis on the final four.

Nonlucid dreams can lack coherence and specificity, and they tend to be more easily forgotten than lucid ones: philosophers Jennifer Windt and Thomas Metzinger point out that "common features of disorientation, confabulatory reasoning, and amnesia are much less pronounced in lucid dreams."[9] Why is this so? Charles Tart put it succinctly when he said that the lucid dreamer has effectively "awakened in terms of mental functioning *within* the dream world."[10] When we are awake, our thoughts are more rational, critical, and analytical than in most nonlucid dreams, and so it often is when we "wake up" inside a dream. Celia Green and Charles McCreery note that lucid dreams "are in the literal sense of the word 'lucid,' in that the dreamer seems to be rational and clear-headed."[11]

Of course, not all lucid dreams demonstrate highly rational thinking, while some nonlucid dreams do; dreams occur on a continuum of conscious awareness in which rational thinking can fluctuate from moment to moment. Nevertheless, we can note the *general tendency* of lucid dreams to exhibit instances of rational thinking to a greater extent than most nonlucid dreams. It is also important to recognize that even when a nonlucid dream demonstrates a high level of rational thought, this occurs within a bubble of illusion, since the dreamer remains unaware that all she experiences is a dream. The "rational thought" bar is set higher in lucid dreams, where the illusion of the dream is seen through and thought operates from this premise. As psychologist Deidre Barrett concludes in her paper "Just How Lucid Are Lucid Dreams?", despite fluctuations of cognitive functioning in lucidity, there is still "a progression toward more complete waking cognitive abilities."[12]

The lucid dreamer can retain memories of her waking-life situation, which might include, for example, the ability while in the dream to recall what her current job is or where she is asleep that night.[13] These memories,

combined with rational thought, allow the lucid dreamer to recall the current problem, project, or invention she is working on in waking life and focus her intention toward finding a creative solution within the lucid dream. For example, while writing my first novel *Breathing in Colour*,[14] I was stuck on the voice of the protagonist, who has the neurological condition of *synaesthesia*, the mingling of the senses across modalities.[15] Because I am not a synaesthete myself, I decided to try and expand my sensory perceptions in a lucid dream in which I immediately recalled my intention to experience synaesthesia:

> *. . . I am standing in front of a wall of textured strips which I decide to touch to see whether any synaesthetic associations occur. I stroke my hand across the first one, which is hard and grainy, laid out in corduroy strips. Stroking it is strange; it feels so real . . . I ask myself what I taste when I rub it but nothing comes up and I reflect that taste sensations are fairly rare in dreams. I move onto the next texture. This one is soft and slightly furry, sort of like velour. It tastes of porridge!*[16]

This lucid dream enabled me to experience directly what is possibly the closest thing to synaesthesia that a non-synaesthete with no special equipment or mind-altering drugs[17] can experience. It deepened my understanding of the rush of multisensory sensations through which synaesthetes might experience the world, and it generated fresh ideas for the kinds of sensory connections (velour = porridge) that might be elicited through touch. My brief creative block vanished and I immersed myself in the multisensory voice of my fictional character. Psychopathologist Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel writes: "The process of creation [is] accompanied by the capacity to communicate with the most primitive layers of the unconscious."[18] If this capacity to communicate includes the ability to ask the unconscious—in the form of the dreaming mind—directly for creative inspiration, then the lucid dreamer could well have an advantage over the nonlucid dreamer. Rational thought and the recollection of a preset task can be brought directly to these "primitive layers of the unconscious" in the form of lucid intention in the dream state.

Heightened visual and kinesthetic perception is characteristic of lucid dreams.[19] Mystery writer John Locatelli remarks upon the perceptual differences he has noticed upon becoming lucid in a dream as being "like the difference between watching a movie in black and white, and suddenly having it change to color."[20] Although my nonlucid dreams can be

exceptionally vivid with bright, clear colors, in my most effortless lucid dreams the experience is like having hawk vision. In nonlucid dreams, I can see the leaves on the trees; in a lucid dream, I can see the veins on the leaves on the trees. When I fly in lucid dreams, the sensation of movement is utterly convincing and every nerve end tingles.

This heightened perception, combined with the element of conscious attention in lucid dreams, contributes to the "staying power" of the image, as we can consciously focus on those elements of the dream that interest us, in full knowledge of the fact that we are dreaming, and remind ourselves to remember all we experience upon awakening. The conscious intention —*while in the dream*—to remember the dream can aid detailed dream recall but even if this intention is not voiced, the strong kinesthetic and perceptual qualities of the lucid dream render it memorable. Clearly it would be a pity to have a lovely creative dream and never really know about it because it is either forgotten or else grows frustratingly vague and fragmented the moment we wake up. With lucid dreams, this risk is minimized.[21]

Combing through nonlucid dreams for *project-specific* creative solutions can feel a little like the children's game where you are blindfolded, spun in circles, and then asked to pin the tail on the right part of the donkey. This is not intended to suggest that the process never works, as the ancient art of dream incubation can certainly nudge nonlucid dreams toward creative solutions. Even so, as Stephen LaBerge and Howard Rheingold observe, "Without lucidity, it seems we have no way to determine when, or even if, a creative dream might occur. However, through lucid dreaming we may be able to bring the extraordinary creativity of the dream state under conscious control."[22] There are, indeed, different dream control techniques that can lead to creative inspiration. Before we examine these, let us take a look at the nature of dream control.

Lucid Choices: Lotus Position or Dream Magician?

Sometimes people have an initial resistance to lucid dreaming, believing that it is synonymous with continuous, dominant dream control that might divert the natural direction of the dream and distort or eliminate important messages from the unconscious.[23] Yet reports of recurring dreams or nightmares

indicate that dreams tend to recur if their message has not been received or acted on. Besides, lucid dreaming is *not* always synonymous with, or reliant upon, deliberate dream control. In his book detailing his experiments with lucid dreaming, Kenneth Kelzer observes: "lucidity does not seem to act as an inhibitor of the unconscious, nor . . . take on some kind of adversary relationship toward the dreamscape, as if to suppress it, distort it for ego gratification, or manipulate it in any harmful way."[24] My own experiences support Kelzer's view—first, it is perfectly possible simply to go with the flow of the lucid dream, much as one does in nonlucid dreams, and second, even in the most determinedly controlled lucid dream, there are always uncontrollable elements, so that the spontaneity of the dream never disappears completely.

Perhaps of more interest than the question of whether we "should" control lucid dreams is the question of whether we can actually *avoid* influencing the dream at all. Simply becoming aware that we are dreaming affects dream content. Carl Jung, writing of dream archetypes, notes: "unconscious content . . . is altered by becoming conscious and by being perceived."[25] Conscious attention and thoughts can influence dream imagery, which is one of the reasons why lucid dreaming is such a fascinating state: we can watch as our thoughts influence the dream environment. For example, if we notice a red buttercup and think impartially, "Buttercups aren't normally red," when we look again we might discover that the color has been "corrected" and is now yellow. Who does the correcting? Did we "control" the color of the buttercup?

Who controls what in a lucid dream seems to hinge on three elements: (1) actions and events generated by the dream itself, independently of the dreamer's conscious intention; (2) actions and events the lucid dreamer intends to change or provoke; and (3) actions and events the lucid dreamer *does not consciously intend to change* but inadvertently does, simply by thinking certain thoughts, to which the dream environment then responds, often to the surprise of the dreamer. Even when a lucid dreamer carries out deliberate actions, the dream does not always respond as expected. Dutch novelist and psychiatrist Frederik van Eeden, who examined his lucid dreams in a 1913 paper, deliberately tried to smash a claret glass with his fist in a lucid dream, but it did not shatter. However when he looked at the glass again, he found that it had belatedly responded to his expectations. He remarks, "It broke all right, but a little too late, like an actor who misses his

cue. This gave me a very curious impression of being in a fake-world, cleverly imitated, but with small failures."[26]

If we try too hard not to "control" the dream, we end up controlling our own thoughts, trying not to think anything that might influence the dream. This is fun to try and can be useful when settling into meditation in a lucid dream, but as long as representational imagery persists, "not thinking" is not sustainable for long as it is the nature of the mind to cogitate, to question what we see and experience, and to delight in colors and shapes. If we relax and enjoy the lucid dream, we will unintentionally influence certain elements of the dream simply by thinking about what we see or feel, just as an artist's preoccupations and influences as he works on a piece might affect its direction.

During waking life, whole minutes or even hours can slip by without us paying particular attention to the state of consciousness in which we currently find ourselves, and so it is in dreams. Moments of reflective self-awareness in dreams sometimes—but not always—lead to lucidity, but can just as quickly be lost again. Within one minute of dreaming, we could first be nonlucid, then prelucid[27] (suspecting this could be a dream and testing the dream reality, perhaps reaching the wrong conclusion at first), then lucid, only to then lose lucidity. Similarly, within a single lucid dream, awareness fluctuates. We might at first be effortlessly lucid but then notice that our reasoning has lost its lucid clarity and grown flawed. Later in the same dream, we might feel lucidity slipping away and struggle to remain lucid and "stabilize" the dream environment by whichever technique works best for us —for example, calming our breath and emotions, focusing on the dream scenery, spinning in circles, or looking at our hands. Since lucidity fluctuates, this often dictates the amount of control we exercise on the dream, and we can engage different types of dream control within a single lucid dream.

For my doctoral study, I generated primary source data in the form of 25 case studies, all of whom were lucid dreamers. Fifteen of the case studies were professional creative writers who were interviewed via a research questionnaire and email correspondence about the role of lucid dreaming in their creative process, including overcoming obstacles, providing story ideas, and contributing to plot development. Five more case studies were visual artists who use lucid dreaming as part of their creative process. They also completed a questionnaire, with their responses reflecting the broader

experiential relationship between lucid dreaming and creativity. To further enrich the primary data, research questionnaires were issued to five lucid dream researchers who have published academic papers or books on the subject. These data were included to obtain subject-specific reflections on the theoretical possibilities of lucid dreaming as a creative tool. The final area of primary data came from my own experiments with lucid dreaming. As an integral part of my research methodology, I wrote a novel, *Breathing in Colour*,[28] that documents a mother's search through India for her missing daughter, with the three main characters drawing upon lucid dreaming for different creative outlets. The novel is itself the practical outcome of drawing on lucid dreaming at every stage of the creative writing process.

When the study began in 2003, its originality was emphasized by the relative lack of both primary and secondary sources I encountered, which seemed likely to impose a limitation on its development. However, a significant number of case studies were found, thereby generating further original primary data in what can be considered an initial study of lucid dream creativity. Secondary sources were drawn on whenever data or theories were available. The study also tracked the process of a lucid dreaming fiction writer and in doing so provides a blueprint for drawing on lucid dreams in the writing process.

I identified four dream control techniques[29]: passive observation, passive participation, sporadic control, and continuous control. When I explored the creative potential of these techniques through my case studies and my own experiments, I discovered that each technique contributes to the creative process in different ways. A brief overview of my findings follows.

Lotus Position: Passive Observation

In passive observation lucid dreams, we become "just a pair of eyes," practicing an attitude of detached awareness and allowing the dream to continue around us without attempting to control it. This includes abstaining from physical involvement with dream figures or objects, adopting an attitude of alert observation as dream imagery unfolds, and refraining from projecting "guiding" thoughts that might change the dream—as the thought "Wouldn't it be cool if my cat appeared in this dream?" could well result in the

manifestation of the lucid dreamer's cat, perhaps modifying the course of the dream.

Frederik van Eeden spoke of witnessing "different luminous phenomena, sunlight, clouds, and especially a deep blue sky [accompanied by] a feeling of deep bliss and gratitude."[30] My case studies reported lucid dream imagery such as the approach of "a bruised and bloody wave," "millions of minnows . . . brilliant red spots beside the gills," and "a hummingbird dipping its beak into a rain-filled morning glory."[31] I have elsewhere described these images, when they encapsulate or lead to a creative idea, a painting, or poetry, as "multi-sensory, kinesthetic, numinous, emotive, archetypal lucid idea-images."[32] My immersion in these images led me to create a series of lucid dream collages that appeared in the 2005 Dream Art Exhibition at the annual conference for the International Association for the Study of Dreams in Berkeley, California (Figure 3.1).

In one lucid dream, I observed vivid orange flowers with blue spots at their centers. I looked more closely and saw that the spots were eyes that were watching me with an intelligent, autonomous consciousness. This image had a strong emotional impact on me, which I felt in the same way that one feels a "lump in the throat" when moved. The image, along with the feeling of it in my throat, was imprinted on my mind when I awoke and I transposed it directly into the first lucid dream of *Breathing in Colour* in the form of watchful marigolds floating down a river.

Figure 3.1.
"Conscious in the Unconscious" by Clare R. Johnson, 1994, mixed media.

Passive observation offers the possibility of collating interesting, perceptually vivid and memorable imagery while allowing the dream to pursue its natural course as far as possible. It does not demand high lucidity. However, my case studies did not report many instances of this level of dream control feeding into or sparking creative ideas. Fishing for imagery in a stance of passive observation is fascinating in terms of witnessing the dreaming mind in the act of creating streams of imagery, but it does not necessarily result in a significant number of images useful to a current creative project, possibly because of its restricted experiential impact upon

the lucid dreamer who remains "just a pair of eyes" observing the scene, a bit like watching TV. Could a greater level of engagement with the dream lead to stronger creative input?

Going with the Flow: Passive Participation

One of my case studies, artist Russell Ruskin, comments: "I've never been skydiving but I could paint an image from my direct experience of the replication of the experience in a lucid dream."[33] This area of dream control differs from passive observation in that rather than hanging back and observing the scene, the dreamer engages with the naturally occurring action of the dream, with no overt attempt to control it. Thus, if he becomes lucid in the middle of a chase scene in which he is a little old lady being pursued by a gang of space hoppers, he grips his walking stick more tightly and continues to flee. In this way, as my case study Locatelli remarked, "the [lucid] dreamer can experience the story they create."[34] When a lucid dreamer allows the dream action to engage him physically, he is opening himself up to a broad range of kinesthetic input: sliding across an ice floe, flying to the stars, hugging a friend who died 10 years ago. These experiences can be consciously savored as they occur.

Perhaps of particular use to creative artists are those sensations not normally experienced in waking life. Locatelli reports the sensation in a lucid dream of "moving upward, away from the earth at enormous speed," and "the amazing physical effort it took to move my arms outward as they seemed tied to my body with strong elastic bands." He writes, "I used only the part of moving at high speed in my book, but in my next book . . . I plan to use . . . the difficulty in moving my arms outward."[35] Sensations in lucid dreams, which surpass waking-life experience, could help writers, artists, and scientists to overcome creative blocks.[36] Again, strong lucidity is not necessary for passive participation in lucid dreams; indeed, the main challenge is not to get so sucked in to the dream action that lucidity slips.

Passive participation in lucid dreams is similar to nonlucid dreaming, because despite the lucid dreamer's conscious gaze and her access to waking-life memories, she surrenders completely to the action of the dream. This could be useful to creative artists as the generator not only of numinous,

emotive imagery, but also of a range of experiential situations. For instance, in one dream I became lucid while playing with my new juggling balls. Instead of lunging erratically at the balls as they flew past my nose (as I had while learning to juggle the previous day), in the dream I instinctively relaxed, breathed from my belly, looked not at the balls but into the middle distance, and felt my arms swing in synchrony. Although I had previously been hopeless at juggling, upon waking up I was able to juggle three balls in long sequences. Something had "clicked" in the lucid dream and my body now understood the rhythm.

A possible drawback of this dream control technique, as with passive observation, is that going with the flow of the dream action and participating in a roller coaster of events means the dreamer risks not connecting with dream material that is of specific creative use to the work-in-progress. However, a library of stimulating experiences is formed that the creative artist may draw upon at any time. My case studies preferred this area of dream control to that of passive observation, but the method they found most useful is the one described next, which takes advantage of the lucid dreamer's ability to intentionally guide and shape the dream.

Director's Chair: Sporadic Control

Russian philosopher Piotr Ouspensky says of his lucid dreams, "Usually I only gave the first impetus, and after that the dreams developed as it were of their own accord, sometimes greatly astonishing me by the unexpected and strange turns which they took."[37] Just as a sensitive film director allows her actors the creative freedom to improvise and experiment with their own versions of a character, only intervening to nudge them in the right direction, so sporadic lucid dream control involves an initial impetus by the dreamer, who then metaphorically sits back and watches as the dream takes the idea or suggestion and runs with it. Asking questions of the dream environment or dream figures falls into this category, as does the intention to meet and converse with an inspirational person such as an admired artist. At any time within the period of lucidity, dream control might be reinitiated, but the main point about this technique is that it is not continuous; rather, the dream is allowed to take its course between *bouts of direction* on the part of the lucid

dreamer.

The majority of my case studies revealed that for them, a degree of dream control was conducive to the creative process, resulting in project-specific creative ideas and inspiration. Barrett notes, "Lucidity has certain advantages in the preciseness with which one can request help."[38] Once, when lucid and standing in a field of grass, I asked the dreamscape what kind of lucid dreams my main novel character should have, and a scarecrow-like figure appeared. Then the grass turned to quicksand, into which I began to sink. I woke up. The silent figure in the field, which emanated a strange sense of autonomy, combined with the sensation of sinking into something deep, interested me. I was now convinced that my protagonist needed a mysterious figure to interact with in her lucid dreams. In the *creative trance*, where imagery from the dream is observed and developed, my exploration of the scarecrow image mingled with the memory of a report of hypnogogic imagery I had read about, where a man's torso rose out of the sea, but instead of a head, it had "a large golden disc engraved with ancient designs."[39] This mixing of lucid dream imagery with an associative memory led me to create the disc-headed man, who became a central character in my novel.[40]

Studies suggest that athletes can enhance sports skills by recalling and acting on their intention to practice when they become lucid in a dream.[41] Similarly, artists or those with a creative block can guide their dreams with an initial impetus such as "I'd like to try glass blowing" or "I need a better idea for my book," and then see what happens next. The sporadic control technique was favored by my case studies for meeting their creative goals because a minimum of dream control is combined with passive techniques; as might be expected from such a flexible state, this approach was found to generate a range of different and surprising phenomena. Such a technique may demand stronger lucidity than the passive techniques, but my case studies did not report this to be problematic. Since the lucid dreamer can ask project-specific questions directly of the unconscious, the imagery and events that arise in the dream in response to a prompt are likely to have direct relevance to a current creative project. Could this project-specific response be increased through a matching increase in the level of dream control? Is creativity freed or stifled through continuous control of a lucid dream?

Dream Magician: Continuous Control

One of my case studies, psychologist Jorge Conesa-Sevilla, remarks, "During lucidity there is direct manipulation of the dreamscape, a creative process itself that . . . impacts memory and subsequently ideas while in waking reality."[42] Continuous control denotes a lucid dream in which the dreamer continually attempts to shape the dream reality through dream control, which might take the form of simple commands, the interrogation of a dream figure, or decisions such as jumping off a cliff to experience the fall and deciding halfway down to try and fly back up. Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche observes, "A magician can make a single stone appear first as an elephant, then as a snake, then as a tiger. But these different objects are illusory, like the objects in a dream that are all made from the light of the mind."[43] In lucid dreams, continuous control over illusory objects and events enables the dreamer to become what I have described as a "dream magician," a term I use to reflect the sensation of magic making in dreams where the action is continually steered in ways specific to a current creative project.[44] This brings to mind a comment that the Marquis d'Harvery de Saint-Denys made in 1867: that it is not always easy to achieve continuous control throughout a lucid dream, as this requires strong, effortless lucidity.[45]

Even when dream control is continuously exerted, not every element of the dream is rigidly controlled; the color of the sky or the words spoken by a dream figure may well remain undetermined by the lucid dreamer. The lucid dreamer exerting continuous control might determine the focal event and continue to attempt to shape and direct what then occurs, but there is always the possibility for unforeseen occurrences, and these events have great potential for original manifestations.

How useful is this tighter form of dream control for creativity? One of my case studies, artist Epic Dewfall, simply walks into an art gallery in his lucid dreams and memorizes the best paintings, then wakes himself up to reproduce them. Robert Waggoner rediscovered the creative energy he needed to write *Lucid Dreaming: Gateway to the Inner Self* in a lucid dream when he physically picked up a black woman, placed her in front of him, and asked her, "Who are you?" When she replied, "I am a discarded aspect of your self," he felt the need "to reintegrate her into my being" and did so; she

evaporated into him. Waggoner says, "[A]fter this lucid dream I could suddenly feel the new ideas and positive emotions about writing a book."[46] One computer programmer works on flowcharts and codes with "Einstein" in his lucid dreams; he then concentrates on the flowchart and wills himself to wake up. He remarks, "I take this to work and usually it is 99 percent accurate."[47]

From the preceding accounts, it seems that continuous control does not necessarily have an adverse effect on creativity; on the contrary, it can be very useful for targeting direct creative inspiration, freeing creative blocks, or working on a current project while actually in the dream. As dream researcher Ed Kellogg points out, "Intentionality in the dream seems almost akin to creation."[48] The exploration of any number of outcomes is possible while lucidity is retained, providing the lucid dreamer with a flexible idea-making tool. Yet the majority of my case studies preferred the sporadic control method, in which the dream is guided minimally, as they felt continuous control might repress the perceived natural creative manifestation of the dream. As one of my case studies, dream researcher Beverly D'Urso, stated, "If one always changes the action, environment, or characters, one may miss out on some interesting experiences."[49]

Out of Control?

Is there a "wrong" way to interact with our lucid dreams? I will not discuss areas such as ego inflation or the avoidance of shadow issues, as these topics were not addressed in my doctoral research. My case studies, when invited to comment on the pitfalls of lucid dreaming in the creative process, suggested the main concern was that of overt, dominant dream control. Consequently, I will cap this discussion of the creative possibilities of dream control with a brief look at the sort of thing that can happen if we become overly keen to control our dreams. Lucid dreaming can be a struggle; it can be supremely frustrating to try again and again to become lucid and perhaps, like Frederic W. H. Myers, one of the founders of the Society for Psychical Research, succeed only three nights out of 3,000![50] Then, of course, once we finally get lucid, the pressure is really on—what do we do with these precious moments? It is no wonder that sometimes, instead of adopting an attitude of alert

curiosity and simply enjoying lucidity, we whip out our plan of action and go all-out to implement it.

Author Jeff Warren describes how he attended a lucid dream camp with Stephen LaBerge. Participants were encouraged to set goals for what to do once they realized they were dreaming. When Warren became lucid, he attempted continuous control because he wanted to tick off as many of his lucid dream goals as possible: examining texture, engaging in conversation, having sex, and flying. Yet despite his determination, the dream did not respond to this forced agenda as he might have hoped. With characteristic humor, Warren reports what happened when he tried to have dream sex with his third-grade crush (now all grown-up): "It was like kissing a zombie. Her head lolled to the side and her eyes were blank. Man, my characters were *terrible*, what the hell was wrong with me? I was disgusted with myself. No wonder I wrote nonfiction."[51]

From a creativity perspective, this dream did provide a wonderful anecdote for Warren's book *Head Trip*, so it added to a current creative project, but at the same time, the dreamer's single-minded intention to achieve his preset goals could be said to have distorted the natural spontaneity (read "creativity") of the dream. As if in defiance of this, the dream provided a series of obstacles, from shoppers the dreamer knocked out of his way and a plate-glass window he smashed through, to six scary Alsatians, a zombie lover, and infuriatingly short drops when he was trying to get a good take-off for his dream flight. Looking back on this lucid dream, Warren remarks: "I thought it was a good example of how to degrade an interesting dream experience with an agro waking-style fulfillment schedule."[52] He did manage to hug an oak tree, though, so it was not all bad.

Lucid dreaming is a conversation: we can use our lucidity to *respond* to our dream, just as we respond to our bodies when we direct our awareness to our movements. I like to think of dreamwork, both during and after the dream, as being a bit like yoga—not the sort of yoga where we wrench at our limbs with belts or sweat in sauna-like rooms, but rather the compassionate yoga where we accept our body's limitations and work our limbs with respect and kindness, not berating ourselves for our pot-belly or inflexible spine. In lucid dreams, in theory we can do "whatever we like," but in practice, this achievement depends on how lucid we are and how the dream responds to our attitude, so dream control is far from being a given. It is, however, a

learnable skill, and we are free to experiment! Over time, most people discover the best way for them personally to engage with their lucid dreams.

Each of the four dream control techniques discussed here has been shown to contribute to the creative process. The possible experiential limitations of passive observation, and the restricted role of both of the passive techniques as generators of project-specific dream phenomena, might result in these passive levels of lucid dreaming being outstripped in their usefulness for creativity by more active levels of dream control. However, working with lucid dream imagery *after* the dream, in the creative trance (as described in the meditation section), can rectify this nonspecificity. Sporadic control and continuous control are techniques that can instantly generate *project-specific* kinesthetic, multisensory, emotive imagery and experiences, or instances of creative thinking that are relevant to the work-in-progress and might therefore be of comparatively more use to those in search of creative inspiration.

Another of my case studies, experienced lucid dreamer George Gillespie, comments: "Lucid dreaming appears to be a creative process in itself, particularly when the dreamer works with the dream and experiments."[53] One of the fabulously creative things about lucid dreaming is the special interplay between the dreamer and the dream. Active dream control, which gives the dream the space and freedom to form a creative response, seems to offer a wider spectrum of experiential and creative possibilities than becoming "just a pair of eyes." However, there is another type of lucid dream I would like to consider, one to which the passive techniques seem particularly well suited. Let us abandon dream imagery for a moment and dive into the "void." I will begin with one of my own dreams.

Lucid Suspension: Exploring the Void

> *"I'm dreaming," I realize, and immediately the dreamscape bucks and swirls, tipping me over into a shooting flight, down and down at an incredible speed into a rainbow-colored vortex which seems to be made up of an infinite number of dots. I'm not frightened but it's all I can do to hold onto my lucidity as I am sucked along into spirals of this color and light . . . I am propelled out of the bottom of it into a motionless space. I am suspended in space—dream space, I think. There is nothing here, just millions of greyish dots and I am one of the dots . . . A feeling of great peace comes over me and a sense of gentle, infinite expansion . . . As the sense of expansion increases I am no longer a single dot of consciousness . . . There's just a blissful sense of timelessness and oneness and a merging with the light . . .* [54]

When we think of dreams, most of us tend to think of streams of fantastic imagery, but there are also reports of minimalistic dreamscapes, spaces made up of light, and sensations of being buffeted by black winds or floating bodiless in infinite space.[55] In lucid dreams, we can consciously access these nonrepresentational, nonphysical dimensions. Dream researchers Linda Magallon and Ryan Hurd refer to this state as *imageless lucid dreaming* and Hurd has created paintings of the swirling lights and vortexes he has seen there.[56] Artist Fariba Bogzaran favors the term *hyperspace lucidity* to describe this experience, and her paintings represent its light forms and spatial vastness.[57] I think of this state as *lucid suspension* because of the sensation of being suspended, lucid and often bodiless, in a vast space where there may or may not be imagery, sound, and movement. For simplicity's sake, and in deference to the way lucid dreamers commonly label this state when describing it, I will refer to it here as the "void." The void can involve sensations of rushing or falling, similar to those experienced in hypnogogic states where the body's sensory system is in transition and we get all sorts of visual, kinesthetic, or auditory impressions. Lucidity is preserved, along with a spatial sense and, often, visual depth—for example, of darkness. Some people report observing geometric shapes, disks of light, or oscillating lines, but in general the void is empty of representational imagery such as objects or people.

My experience of the void detailed at the start of this section shows passive participation leading to passive observation—observing the dots without attempting to move or shift anything—and resulting in a non-dual experience. People pay to lie in flotation tanks of warm, salty water to experience sensory deprivation. They risk "burning eye" if a drop of water splashes onto their face, and they emerge slicked in salt that takes ages to wash out of their hair, but they find themselves to be lighter in spirit, so the experience is worth it. The void offers a free, no-salt alternative that we can visit from the comfort of our own beds. Experienced lucid dreamers have found ways of experiencing the void whenever they want. Hurd remarks, "I can enter the void at will when I disturb an ongoing scene by, for example, walking through a mirror or sinking through the dream ground."[58] When artists attempt to translate their knowledge of the void into art, their depictions of what they have seen and experienced can make for enlightening representations of internal landscapes. Bogzaran says, "Attempting to express [the] sheer luminosity and multidimensionality has tested and expanded my

creative abilities."[59]

As a lucid dream experience, the void offers possibilities for in-the-dream creative experimentation such as observing the transition from void to dream imagery and back again, or even composing music. Back in the days when the void was not a common experience for me, I once found myself floating in infinite black space. I hung there for a while wondering if this was an out-of-body experience or just a very boring lucid dream, before amusing myself by building up an invisible orchestra, instrument by instrument, to thunderous and realistic effect, despite the fact that the height of my waking-life musical ability amounted to playing "Three Blind Mice" on the recorder when I was seven. The crescendo was so loud that I woke up . . . to a silent bedroom.

Conesa-Sevilla refers to sleep paralysis as *bound lucidity* because the sensation is often that of being unable to move one's limbs. This experience, although often associated with terrifying "presences," can lead to experiences of the void. Conesa-Sevilla explains that choice comes into the way such states are approached: "[Sleep paralysis] can potentially convey two disparate signals: 'anxiety and fear' or 'it is now time to float about and enjoy a remarkable otherworldly dreamscape.' "[60] Our attitude toward our circumstances is the one thing we can change, as I found out for myself after baffling experiences of being sucked willy-nilly through the void with no sense of where I was going or how it was happening. If we release fear and remain calm and curious, this type of lucid event can lead to beautiful non-dual experiences that could lie at the heart of creativity.

For the fearless lucid explorer, the void becomes a creative space in which to experiment or simply to experience in whichever form it appears. The void is like a gap between imagery-rich dreams, a space pregnant with possibilities. Lama Surya Das explains that in advanced Tibetan meditations, "the student seeks to enter that gap between thoughts, to experience that pregnant stillness . . . Buddhism calls this gap the 'radiant womb of emptiness,' a vital space in which dwell an infinite number of choices and possibilities."[61] Lucidity can seem effortless in the void, perhaps due to the lack of sensory distraction. For the same reason, our minds grow still with unusual ease, enabling us to experience something like "that gap between thoughts" while lucidly suspended in the gap between dreams. This is why the void has strong links with meditative or non-dual states.

Meditation and Non-dual States in Lucid Dreams

The Dalai Lama explains, "When you are able to stop your mind from chasing sensory objects . . . you will begin to see underneath this turbulence of the thought processes. There is an underlying stillness, an underlying clarity of the mind. You should try to observe or experience this . . ."[62] Meditation in the waking state has been linked to creativity, as the mind rests and rejuvenates and, in doing so, sloughs off some of our stress and concerns.[63] Just as we can benefit from waking-life meditation, so we can benefit from lucid-dream meditation. Indeed, lucid dreaming can resemble a spontaneous meditative state.[64] The void can arise spontaneously and is conducive to meditative states, but we can also employ the sporadic control technique to purposefully enter a meditative state in a lucid dream, simply by deciding to meditate.

The more we practice meditation, the easier it becomes to enter deep relaxation. Even so, I have never entered this state of absolute stillness as rapidly as in a lucid dream. In the dream state, the body and its perennial complaints can be shrugged off and forgotten. To ensure that distracting imagery does not recur once the dream eyes are closed in preparation for meditation, it is sometimes necessary to concentrate initially on stilling the mind. At other times, lucid dream meditation seems effortless, as in the following example of my own dream:

> *I close my eyes. All imagery vanishes and it goes black. Instantly I am deeply relaxed, it's so much faster than meditation in the waking state and I marvel at how deep I go within seconds, with no back discomfort or sensory distractions . . . I can't feel my dream body at all; I seem to be floating . . . I am now in a deep, trancelike state, my thoughts slowing . . . The darkness is turning to light and as I watch, I become surrounded by and suspended in golden light. It feels so wonderful, like being transformed into radiance . . . It no longer seems separate from me; I am the light and it is me . . . I eventually wake up feeling as if I am still bathed in it, refreshed and quiet and peaceful.*[65]

Meditation in lucid dreams can lead quite quickly to a non-dual experience or the void, possibly because closing our eyes has a far stronger effect in dreams than in waking life—we could find ourselves being borne along by invisible forces or spontaneously levitating. Lucid dreamers who focus on imagery when trying to meditate rather than closing their eyes may find the results distracting. In one lucid dream, I stared at my eyes in a mirror

and saw that the iris and pupils were actually tiny, spinning spheres with oceans and land masses—two miniature planet earths were in my eyes. The effect was so surreal that I woke up. In lucid dreams as in waking life, I am not always successful at meditating, though for different reasons: in another lucid dream, a strong sense of dual body awareness (sitting dream body and prone physical body) as I chanted "OM" proved so distracting that I woke up.

Lucidity can feel like a bit of a tightrope: if we relax too much or get too excited by the imagery, we could lose lucidity, and if we think too hard about our physical body in bed, we might draw ourselves into it and wake ourselves up. As we learn to maintain awareness in the dream, gradually the tightrope broadens and can become as wide as a desert plain, as in dreams where lucidity is effortless and incredibly strong; the dream seems more real than waking reality. Lucidity is about the practice of awareness, and daytime practice of mental awareness such as meditation can help us to retain lucidity in the dream state. Throughout meditation in both the waking state and lucid dreams, we can experience numinous phenomena such as infinite light and the sense of suspension similar to experiences of the void. The waking residue of lucid meditation dreams tends to involve a visceral sense of happiness, peace, and freedom.

Lucid Writing and Non-duality

This expansive state of consciousness is ideal for creativity, because it inspires a sense of boundless possibility and creative braveness, combined with the ability to see life from an optimistic perspective. In such a mind-set we can temporarily release our cynicism and inner critic, allowing for a surge of creative energy that manifests in the form of original ideas and new connections. For creative writers, artists, and thinkers, this expansive state can be recaptured through a technique I developed called *lucid writing*, which I teach in my Dreamwriting workshops.[66] Lucid writing is like a waking version of lucid dreaming with pen in hand. Through a combination of yoga relaxation techniques and focusing on vivid dream imagery or numinous phenomena, a trance-like state is reached in which there is a mounting sense of mental spaciousness and a slowing of the heart rate. Thoughts, ideas, and imagery can be written out in a spontaneous flow without engaging the

critical mind. In the creative trance, imagery is guided in ways similar to sporadic or continuous control in lucid dreams; the initial dream image morphs into something else, and in describing this new imagery, the writer slips into writing fiction.

When developing a recurrent lucid dream figure for one of my novel characters, Mia, I focused my lucid writing on a white wolf with which I had exchanged a long gaze in a passive participation lucid dream. I intentionally introduced a new line of thought, by thinking about Mia as a child. In a flash image, I saw her tucked up in bed, crying. I imagined the wolf in her room—but that scenario was too "Little Red Riding Hood," so I rejected the image. Mia needed something dependable, but with a hint of magic. I watched and wrote as further images unfolded in my mind's eye. Soon an elephant emerged, massive and with a curly trunk. That was good, so I focused on the image and watched it shrink down to the size of a large stuffed toy and perch on Mia's bed. Its blue eyes winked like shiny bindis, and Mia sat up, enthralled. I had the blueprint for the scene of Mia's first lucid dream.[67] This lifelike, tiny elephant morphed into new forms in further lucid writing sessions; it sprouted feathery swan's wings, and I worked out that its blue eyes represented the blue eyes of Mia's dead baby sister. It became an immensely comforting and emotionally charged lucid dream figure for Mia, almost a novel character in its own right.

When a personal dream image is further personalized in the creative trance, original creations can emerge. It is not only experimentation *within* lucid dreams that is useful to the creative process, but also what follows, such as the manipulation of dream material through the lucid writing technique and the integration of this material into artwork or a concept in which it takes on its own power. Non-project-specific imagery brought up in lucid dreams where passive forms of dream control are used can be explored *after* the dream in the creative trance to increase the relevance to a current project. Lucid dream images are creative phenomena that are shaped and transformed not only by the individual consciousness in which they first appear, but also through subsequent reworkings in different states of consciousness such as the creative trance. Possibly the more we meditate in lucid dreams, the easier it becomes to meditate in the waking state, since in lucid dreams we can have the experience of going very deep, very fast. Similarly, the more meditation practice we have under our belt, the easier it may be to relax into the creative trance, where surprising associations are made and new ideas are born.

Practicing meditation in lucid dreams, then, could enhance our waking-life creativity.

Just as lucid dream meditation can lead to the void, so a spontaneous experience of the void can provoke a meditative or non-dual state, especially if kinesthetic perception is minimal—so that we are not clutching onto our dream hats and trying to keep our wits about us as we shoot through a twisting vortex, but instead remain gently suspended in space. After all, there is not a lot else to do when we are bodiless and mainly sense-less besides enter a meditative state, unless we choose to activate dream control or try to return to the imagery of a more usual sort of dream. Reports of transitioning between the void and representational dreaming demonstrate the intricate ways in which imagery surfaces or recedes. LaBerge and DeGracia note that "clues to understanding sensory consciousness may be found in the phenomenology of lucid dream perceptions."[68]

By combining brain imaging and polysomnography with fist-clenching lucid dreaming subjects, neuroscientists in Germany provided "the first demonstration of imaging of specific dream contents."[69] A similar investigation of lucid dream meditations leading to non-dual states could be useful in understanding what occurs in the brain when our sense of self is progressively minimized. In non-dual lucid dream experiences, we generally have a minimal body-sense, perhaps experiencing ourselves as a "dot of consciousness." Sensory perceptions tend to be minimized to an impression of light or darkness, and our thought processes are reduced to a state of nonthought in which we might describe ourselves after the event as having existed as "pure awareness." A spatial sense often seems present as an impression of existing in infinite space," and the non-dual experience might be described as "merging with infinite light," or simply as having no further sense of separate existence. In a sense, we are no longer *in* the gap between dreams: we become it.

I will round off this section by sharing a story about what might be the ultimate non-dual experience—dying. A combination of meditation, lucid dreaming, and non-dual experiences in the void can provide a source of spiritual comfort for people who suffer great pain, helping them to face death with equanimity. Aiha Zemp was born with stumps for arms and legs. She became a highly accomplished meditator and learned lucid dreaming in a week. In the year of her death, she reported 160 lucid dreams. Her Zen

meditation teacher, Dr. Peter Widmer, says that of these lucid dreams, "she had 32 dreams which I call spiritual. In many of them she found herself in oneness in nothing but just light, mostly white light, but also light of other colors. When I asked her about the meaning or significance of these dreams, she said, 'These dreams teach me to die.' "[70] Since Zemp suffered from an incurable disease and was in pain, she chose to die in her native Switzerland when she was 58 years old. One week before her chosen time, she had the following lucid dream:

> I'm lying dead in this room with the view of the Rhine. Just after I die, you five carers go out onto the balcony and are holding sparklers . . . You light the sparklers. Part of me leaves my body and this part is completely porous, it looks like a breath, slightly bluish, like evaporating steam rising from a humidifier, except in a different form, a sort of body form but not really; and it's much bigger than you all are on the balcony. I float through the window without opening it and begin to pluck the stars from the sparklers out of the air as if I had hands, and start to play and dance with them. It's wonderful. Then I go away, up into the air, and dissolve. I wake up feeling happy.[71]

At the time of her death, Zemp's care takers honored this lucid dream. One of them said, "We did exactly what the dream described. We went out onto the balcony and lit the waiting sparklers."[72] This story never fails to bring tears to my eyes; it is not just the beauty of the lucid dream, but rather the way that those who cared for Zemp helped her dream to become reality at the most important moment of life—death.

Lucid Dreaming, Creative Thinking

Windt and Metzinger suggest that "any phenomenologist seriously interested in a rigorous and systematic description of dream content must first master the art of lucid dreaming."[73] This comment highlights the perennial problem for all dream studies—namely, that dream reports are necessarily waking reports of dream memories. Lucid dreaming offers the chance to study the dream while within it. Imagine the possibilities of a rigorous study of consciousness carried out by an experienced lucid dreamer, a study that investigates the enlightening (albeit mundane, since it happens in all lucid dreams) self-realization of the state of consciousness, where we recognize that our surroundings can be modified by conscious intention. In lucid

dreams, we also know we are in a state where we can be bodiless and even have the phenomenological experience of "disappearing" in non-dual states. We are free to experiment creatively with a malleable reality, for as long as lucidity lasts. What might the lucid dreaming consciousness researcher discover about the nature of mind, reality, and consciousness?

To quickly review, despite fluctuations in cognitive ability that vary from dreamer to dreamer and indeed from dream to dream, lucid dreaming can be said to have exceptional qualities of rational thought, the ability to remember preset tasks, heightened perception, conscious attention, detailed dream recall, and dream control, combined with a strong link to the void and meditative or non-dual states.[74] There is still much to be learned about lucid dream phenomena that seem inherently creative and test our comfortably held beliefs about the possibilities of the mind, such as healing, telepathy, and precognition in lucid dreams. The dreaming mind can likely reveal as much about consciousness as the waking mind can, and lucid dreaming could be a crucial key to this process.

Whether we are observing streams of dream imagery or merging with infinite light, a conscious engagement with the dream can result in project-specific creative solutions, artistic ideas, a new way of approaching a problem, and the mental and psychological refreshment that leads to the birth of creative thought. For original art to appear before our eyes and for us to consciously interact with that art, all we need to do is wake up inside a dream. We can practice new and familiar art forms in our dreams, while staying further away from our critical censor since we are asleep, and learn to regain the spontaneity and artistic fearlessness we had as young children.

What happens when we wake up? Does all we have experienced simply vanish? Actually, no: lucid dreams can be as memorable as waking-life experiences and so contribute to the episodic memories of the waking personality.[75] They have been shown to help individuals overcome nightmares, while athletes who practiced sports skills in lucid dreams have shown subsequent improvement in those same skills when awake.[76] These examples indicate that the effects of lucid dreaming are not ephemeral but rather can have lasting psychological and physiological impact. Neuroscience confirms this: "The imagination can form the brain almost to the same degree as actual experience."[77] Surely it is no great leap to suggest that memorable lucid dream experiences can also form the brain. Lucid dreams demand

attention precisely for this reason: if they can form the brain just as waking-life experiences do, then when we practice creativity in our lucid dreams, we can expect creative thinking to happen more in our waking lives since the relevant neuronal connections have been strengthened in our lucid dreams. Michael Czisch of the Max Planck Institute for Psychiatry explains, "Our dreams are . . . not a 'sleep cinema' in which we merely observe an event passively, but involve activity in the regions of the brain that are relevant to the dream content."[78] Thus lucid dream creativity likely does not stop when we wake up, but leaves its traces in our waking brain, thereby enhancing our everyday problem-solving skills, artistic courage, and creative thought processes.

Henry Ford said, "If you think you can do a thing or think you can't do a thing, you're right."[79] One of the most valuable things lucid dreaming does for creativity is remove the preconceptions of what is or is not possible. No longer crippled by hang-ups and preconceived limitations, we are free to experiment with the creative potential of our dreams. The exuberance, deep peace, or sense of magic we experience when we wake up inside a dream is a tonic for the creative mind, enabling us to return to the state of naïve wonder and curiosity from which creative ideas spring. The more often we experience this wonder in lucid dreams, the more easily it could be integrated into our waking consciousness.

In the words of Albert Einstein, "The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed."[80] To which I would add: "and he is clearly not lucid dreaming." As an inherently creative state of consciousness conducive to meditative or non-dual experiences, a state where the dreamer can surpass the limits of waking physical reality and combine the film-like flow of imagery with the optional "magic" of dream control, lucid dreaming is itself an experience of the mysterious.

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4

Dreamed Violence and Shamanic Transformation in Indigenous Nepal and Malaysia

Diana Riboli

Introduction

This chapter aims to describe the significant role played by lucid dreaming in the representation and implementation of violence—symbolic and nonsymbolic—in shamanic indigenous contexts.

Despite the fact that thus far scholars have not been able to find an alternative definition, it should be noted that the terms *shamanism* and *shaman* are both broadly used. Originating from the name of the Tungus traditional healer *saman*, these terms are used when referring to very distant (geographically and culturally speaking) realities and peoples. The generalization and the assemblage under a common definition are conventional and problematic categories constructed in a scientific (mostly Western) environment. However, it is true that many religious specialists, who act as traditional therapists the world over, share common characteristics. These include the use of altered states of consciousness as a therapeutic means and the fundamental importance attributed to dreams and dreaming.

Regarding the field of dream studies, anthropologists have offered their contributions to the understanding of dreams in a cross-cultural perspective since the end of the 19th century. After the pioneering works of Dorothy Eggan on Hopis' dream lore, particularly relevant studies were written in the 1960s, mostly by psychoanalytical-oriented anthropologists and ethnopsychiatrists, who took into account Freudian theories and recognized

universal meanings in dreams.[1] It was with the volume edited by Barbara Tedlock, *Dreaming: Anthropological and Psychological Interpretations*, that anthropology became one of the most important scientific fields in dream studies, also redefining its relationship with psychology and psychoanalysis.[2] Here Tedlock, giving particular relevance to cultural framework, considers the dream narration as a communicative process and a sociocultural activity that is always related to a specific cultural group. In her more recent work Tedlock highlights the changes in anthropological dream studies, emphasizing two aspects in particular. First, nowadays anthropologists no longer study dreams as products distinct from culture, with the aim of comparing Western and not-Western dream theories, but rather as psychodynamic communicative events. Second, from a methodological point of view, anthropologists are starting to pay attention to their own dreams during fieldwork as an "unconscious response" to the culture they are studying.[3]

In my diaries I often took note of the dreams I had while conducting fieldwork. I was often puzzled by their meaning and by the possibility that dreams might be considered a part of the participant-observation process.

The two case studies I refer to primarily are drawn from my fieldwork first among the Chepang of Central and Southern Nepal, and more recently in Peninsular Malaysia among two Semang-Negrito groups: the Jahai and the Batek. The first case looks at the magical fights, taking place mostly during dreams, which can occur between shamans. The second case discusses the lucid dreams experienced by Batek and Jahai when they feel their human forms changing into animal forms, particularly those of tigers.

Since the 1960s, numerous studies have examined the importance of altered state(s) of consciousness (ASC) and dreaming in indigenous cultures and in shamanism in particular.[4] However, little investigation has focused on the links and interrelations between ASCs occurring in awake states (with evident physical manifestations such as body trembling, increased sweating, and so on), ASCs occurring during dreamtime (which can be considered "dreamed" ASCs with no evident physical manifestations), and lucid dreaming states. Of particular interest are cases in which all of these states and the oneiric dimension in particular are believed to have violent repercussions on the lives and physical bodies of the agents.

This outcome is evident when shamans—generally speaking, after some

conflictual encounter with a rival—fight in the course of violent and dramatic dreams during which they feel themselves to be totally conscious and able to interact with the other individual. These lucid dreams can continue for days and even weeks, coming to an end only when one of the rivals dies, both in the dream and in everyday life. Of course, the physical deaths occurring after these conflicts are difficult to explain from a scientific point of view. The scholarly etic view tries to find an explanation in a sort of *nocebo effect* stemming from the cultural narrative of the events—that is, any personal belief that harms mind or body: the opposite of a *placebo effect*. Yet, it should be noted that, from an emic point of view, the actors and the entire social groups to which they belong firmly believe that a real lethal fight occurs between the rivals in the course of lucid dreaming.

For the average person, the basic difference between a normal dream and a lucid dream lies in the fact that, in the latter, the dreamer is aware that she is dreaming. She feels fully conscious and, apparently, can even intervene in her own dream. Looking at shamans the world over, however, this simple distinction appears less clearly defined.

According to the beliefs of many indigenous groups around the globe, trance and dreaming are two interrelated, intertwined, and very similar states. For example, among the Semang-Negrito groups of Peninsular Malaysia, altered states of consciousness are defined with the expression "walking into dreams."[5] According to these populations, what we see and experience in the course of dreams are as real as what we see and experience in the course of the day. During the night, one of the souls/essences of a human being leaves the body of his owner and travels in parallel realities as well as in the human world. For this reason, one should never wake a person from sleep, as the soul may not have enough time to reenter the body.

Losing a soul is considered to be particularly dangerous; indeed, it is one of the main causes of serious illness. The Semang-Negrito, and in particular many Batek and Jahai, often experience lucid dreams, which they consider to be the same as the trance state. Magical fights between human beings are not documented or may not have been reported among these cultures, although some violent lucid dreams can occur in the case of shamans who are able to send their shadow-souls into tiger bodies during sleep time. This is a particularly complex situation, as the individuals who have this kind of lucid dream experience both human and animal states at the same time.

Magical fights are better documented among the Chepang of Central and Southern Nepal, among whom my earlier fieldwork was conducted in the 1990s. Magical fights occurring in the oneiric dimension between two shamans take place on many levels that remain obscure for Western science. They present as follows:

- Altered states of consciousness occurring during waking time, mostly during ceremonies that sometimes can be used to communicate with rivals, generally before the real fight starts.
- Lucid dream states occurring during sleep time, in the course of which the shamans fight, perfectly aware that they are acting in a dream.
- Altered states of consciousness that shamans enter in the course of belligerent lucid dreams to seek the support of their spirit assistants.
- Some form of telepathy. As we will see, rivals can be very far away from each other. Nonetheless, when both are asleep and during their lucid dreams, they feel that they can see, interact with, and even kill each other.

The last part of this chapter focuses on a personal account of a violent lucid dreaming experience I had after attending a particularly dramatic shamanic séance.

Dreams That Kill: Shamanic Fights among the Chepang (Nepal)

The importance of dreams in shamanic complexes is well documented the world over. According to Harry Hunt, dreams have a double function, in that they are specific states of consciousness as well as mechanisms for altering consciousness.[6] This induction process is evident in the deliberate use that the shamans make of sleep and dreams to provoke an alteration in consciousness that, in turn, facilitates access to what Michael Winkelman defines as an "integrative mode of consciousness" (IMC).[7] Among the Chepang of Central and Southern Nepal, as well as in many other shamanic cultures, the link between sleep time, dream time, and altered states of consciousness is

highlighted by the fact that shamanic ceremonies take place during the night. In fact, beating the drum (*ring*) and entering altered states of consciousness are forbidden activities until sunset and generally cease at sunrise.

The Chepang were hunter-gatherers until four or five decades ago. After their sedentarization, they became agriculturalists despite the fact that the land allocated to them is not particularly fertile. Since then, the Chepang have become one of the most marginalized and poorest ethnic groups in Nepal, considered Untouchables by the Hindu population of the country. Their religion and culture are based on shamanic beliefs in which the shamans (*pande*) are key figures, in charge of the well-being of their companions.[8]

The entire initiation of future Chepang *pande* takes place in the course of dreams, with some kind of human intervention only in exceptional cases. Such initiatory dreams are mainly described as lucid dreams. The *pande* are aware they are dreaming and these kinds of conditions are accompanied by out-of-body experiences. At this early stage, in which the candidates still do not fully dominate the shamanic profession, we can observe how their lucid dreams are definitely peculiar, involving more complex states than lucid dreams experienced by the average person. What appears to be particularly important is that during these dreams the future *pande* are instructed by supernatural beings who teach them chants, therapeutic practices, how to beat the drum, and how to access and—later—how to be in control of their altered states of consciousness.

During my fieldwork, many shamans recounted their dreams to me in detail, describing their first *kamnu* (literally "trembling," a word that is generally used in Nepal in the sense of "trance"). The feelings and sensations of the altered states of consciousness experienced during dream time are the same as during wake time while celebrating ceremonies. The only difference lies in the fact that in the second case the ASC acquires a social dimension, visible and tangible to all participants attending a séance because of the *pande*'s external bodily manifestations, such as trembling and sweating (Figure 4.1).

It is tempting to argue that during ceremonies shamans actually interpret and/or manifest their lucid dreams, which would otherwise remain on a personal level, by means of an ASC involving bodily action. The social dimension is fundamental for therapeutic purposes: the patient, her family, and her social group must be involved in the therapeutic process. During each

ceremony, thanks to the symbolic actions of the shaman, cultural and social structures are reconfirmed for the sake of the entire community.

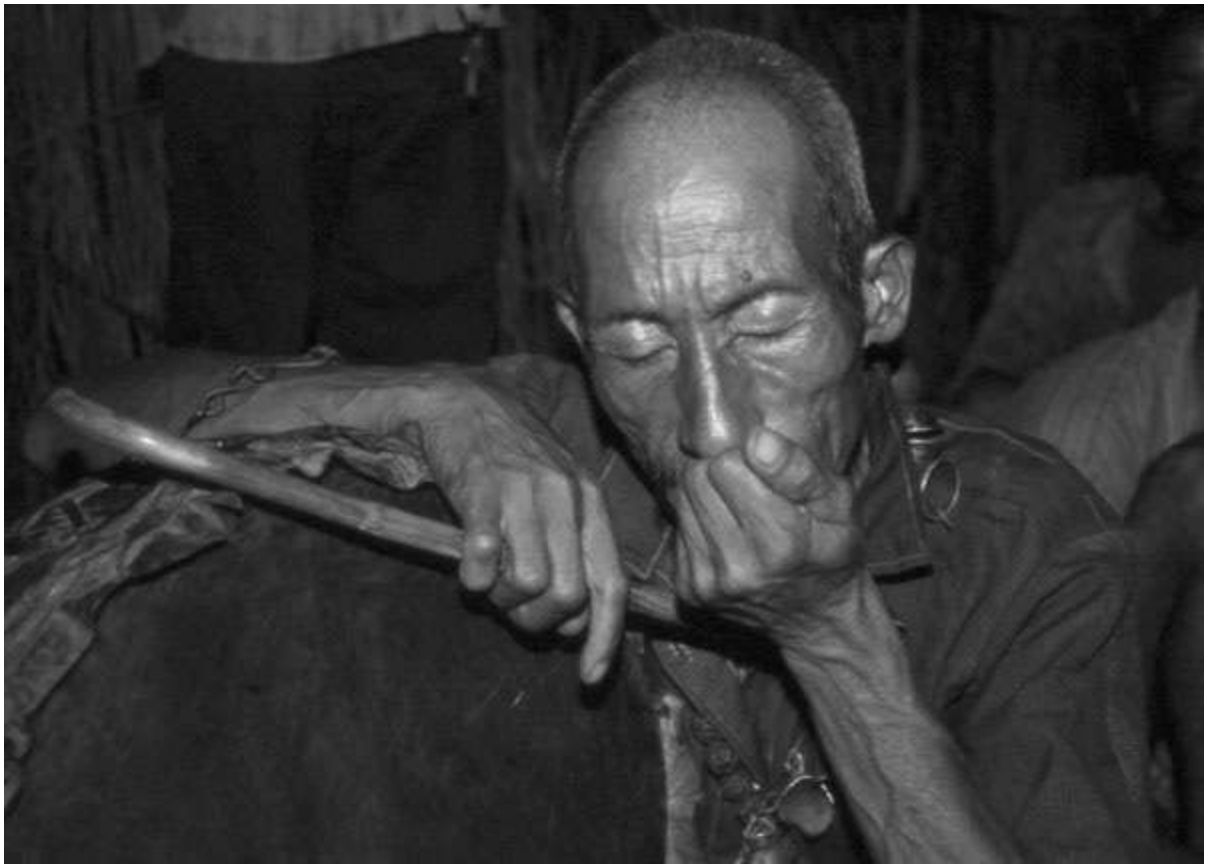

Figure 4.1.
The Chepang *pande* (shaman) Tulo Kancha in an altered state of consciousness.
(Photo: D. Riboli, Makwanpur District, Nepal 1993)

Not all of the shamans' lucid dreams aspire or need to assume a visible social dimension. Some of their lucid dreams involve intense and even dramatic altered states of consciousness that are strictly personal and that—in most cases—are not revealed or narrated. In these secret dreams, the *pande* do not play the role of saviors and their actions do not aim to heal but to harm. Such dreams generally occur after a problematic and antagonistic encounter with another shaman or, sometimes, with another religious specialist. In contrast to the initiatory dreams or other lucid dreams connected with normal shamanic activities in which the *pande* communicate mostly with the supernatural world, in these dreams they deal with other antagonistic human beings.

The beginning of hostilities depends on different factors in which the

antagonism between two rivals results in a battle fought in dreams with the help of magical weapons. *Pande* generally try to avoid fighting, but whenever this is not possible, conflict usually ends with the physical death of one of the contenders.

Before analyzing these types of dreams, I would like to report two very rare cases some *pande* discussed with me. The first story was told by Krishora Devi Prajā, a shaman considered very powerful by her community.

One day, Krishora was called to a village far away from where she lived to treat a sick child. When she arrived, after walking for many hours, she met another shaman from a different ethnic group who had been called before her to treat the child. During the first diagnostic ceremony, the *pande* discovered that supernatural beings had already decided to take the child's life and she asked the other shaman for his opinion. The shaman got very angry with her, underestimating her knowledge first of all because of her gender, but Krishora showed him her strength, telling him:

> If you can send me an arrow and destroy me, my breast is open and I will have to eat your excrement. If you can defeat me, you can kill me; but if you cannot, then you will die![9]

The altercation continued until the rival shaman left the house, threatening to kill Krishora. According to her, the man was a cheat, a shaman who was using his profession and knowledge to his own advantage. In fact, in her opinion, instead of curing the child, he had probably made offerings and pronounced magic formulas to make the situation worse. In this way he would have been able to ask the parents of the child for more money and goods.

The magical fight was unavoidable. Because of the power and knowledge of both rivals, the battle came to an end that same night, in the course of only one lucid dream that was described by Krishora:

> . . . Probably when I was sleeping without the covers, the shaman began to say his formulas. I began to dream and I saw the shaman who was ordering his power to bring down all sorts of ills upon me. In the dream, I was followed by many things: I ran and went to hide in a temple dedicated to a local deity. I put my soul in the hands of this god and suddenly I saw a stone that was following me. The stone did not manage to hit me: the shaman then threw three branches from the sāl tree (*Shorea robusta*) at me. But I was able to break both the stone and the branches into little pieces. After this the man had nothing else to throw at me: he did not have the knowledge or sufficient power to throw anything else. I then threw these things back at him and they struck him in the chest. The morning after that I woke up and returned home: a week later,

I heard that the other shaman was dead.[10]

The second case involved another magical fight, this time between a Chepang shaman named Narcing (Figure 4.2) and an Indian hermit. The story came to a less dramatic conclusion, as the *pande* refused to continue the battle until the end. The antagonism between the two men arose in the course of a ceremony celebrated by Narcing to treat a relative. During the séance, an Indian hermit entered the house and, outraged by the presence of the *pande* whom he considered a bearer of impurity, started to challenge and insult him, asking Narcing to show him how much power he had. The *pande* replied by addressing him the same question:

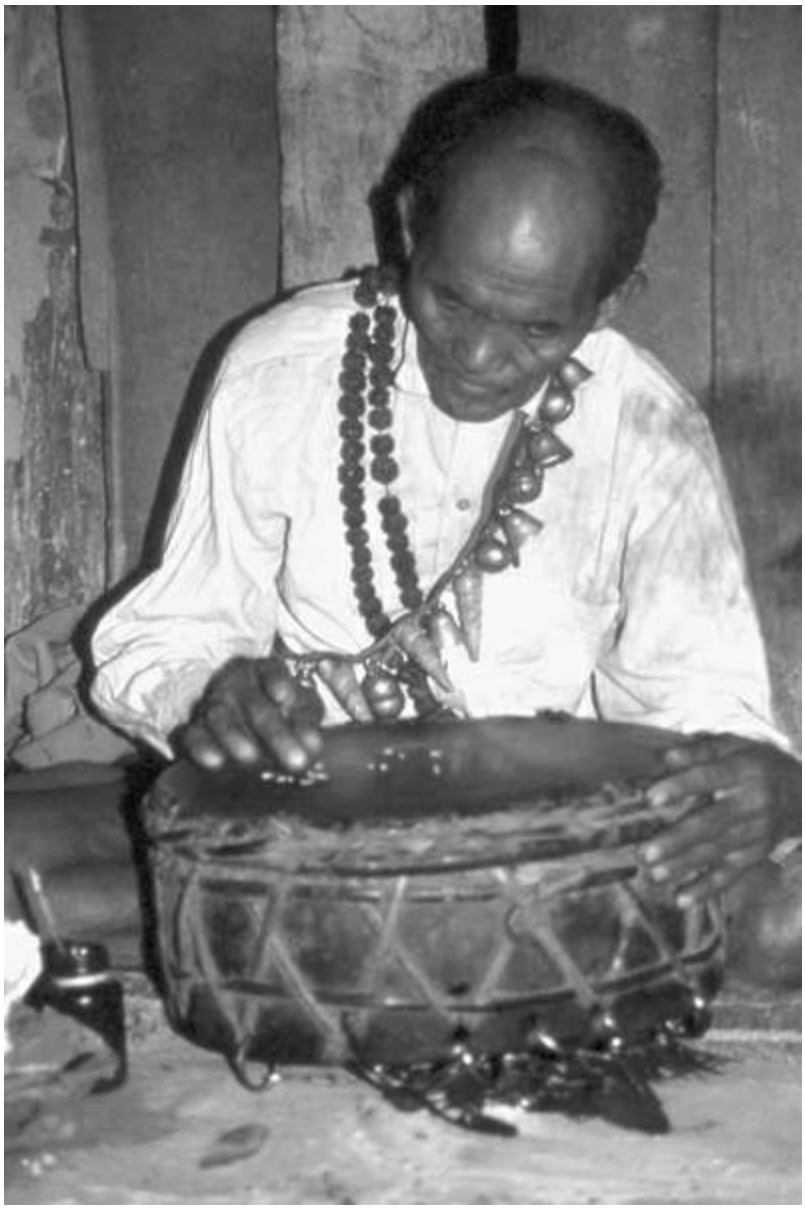

Figure 4.2.
The Chepang *pande* (shaman) Narcing during a divination.
(D. Riboli, Makwanpur District, Nepal, 1995)

> . . . The hermit said, "I have a *trishu* and tongs for the fire: that is enough for me."[11] He then set seven porcupine prickles on the ground before me and told me to start my ceremony, but I said that he should start first so as to prove his knowledge. We were talking when I saw the seven prickles had begun to tremble, because of the power of the hermit, and, suddenly, I heard a whooshing sound go past me: it was one of the prickles. I immediately stood up, and the hermit attacked me again: I heard the sound of a brass vase coming toward me and I sent it off into the distance, I then turned the vase round, using my formulae: but I didn't want to hit the hermit, I just wanted to stop him and protect myself at the same time. The hermit left the house we were in and that night I had a high fever. I decided not to send (in the course of the dream)

my magic arrows: if I had done so one of us would have died.[12]

Narcing did not reveal the dreams he had experienced that night to me but he was very sick for many days after his decision not to fight. This appears to be an exceptional case, as most of the times fights must be taken forward until the end.

As mentioned earlier, it is extraordinarily difficult to gather information on this topic. During my fieldwork I discovered that most of the 30 *pande* with whom I collaborated had had similar experiences but no one, with the exception of Krishora and Narcing, would recount the details. Yet all the Chepang shamans agreed on the fact that sometimes fights cannot be avoided. This is the case when two souls of two different *pande* meet in the Underworld, which is described as a meeting on a narrow bridge crossing a dark and dangerous ocean. I was told that this happens quite often, as it is possible that two shamans living in villages far away from each other could celebrate a ceremony on the same night. The Chepang *pande* call themselves *tunsuriban*, an adjective that denotes their ability to travel in the Underworld. Despite the fact that this realm is described as an idyllic land—as an immense jungle full of game and rivers where the most important supernatural beings live together with the ancestors—access to it is very dangerous, because the *pande* encounter many obstacles in venturing there, including the narrow bridge I mentioned. If two shamans travel to the Underworld at the same moment, it is possible that the two souls will meet on the bridge. The weaker *pande* should immediately give way to the stronger one, but if neither agrees to be the weaker, then the magical fight will start, albeit not on the spot. The real fight will take place in the course of lucid dreams that can last for more than one night and ends with the death of one of the *pande*. The two antagonists generally never meet in person and stay in their respective villages, but in the night their souls meet and fight in a parallel reality. In other words, during the battles the shamans' bodies remain asleep in their huts, but in the lucid dreams they fight while entering altered states of consciousness, giving them the strength and the knowledge necessary to face each other's attacks.

In his important study dedicated to dreaming in the world's religions, Kelly Bulkeley underlines that "even in dreams with a lucid or metacognitive quality of self-awareness, the power of conscious volition is generally quite limited, and the unfolding of the dream continues to produce surprising,

unconsciously created experience."[13] The cases of shamans' violent lucid dreams are quite different, given that the dreamer seems to be in total control of his actions and of his awareness.

Also according to Bulkeley, in the prototypical dreams associated with religious experience, four types of intense dreams are possible: mystical, gravitational, sexual, and aggressive.[14] The cases here can be seen to belong to the aggressive category, which includes dreams of being attacked by another character, which may reflect the biological struggle for survival common among all living beings.[15] All four categories and dream typologies can produce some effect in the waking state, such as orgasms in sexual dreams, sudden waking up due to the sensation of falling in gravitational dreams, the realistic sensation of flying or being reunited with a deceased loved one in mystical dreams, and the extreme fear, rapid breathing, and body sweat of aggressive dreams.[16] After the dangerous encounter with the Indian hermit, Narcing had a high fever that night and was very sick for days, remaining in a semi-conscious state during which—he told me—he was dreaming all the time. Surprisingly, the effects of aggressive lucid dreams experienced by shamans are not limited to the fear or intense sweating that we have all experienced after a nightmare and that normally lasts for just a few minutes. During ASCs occurring in shamanic ceremonies celebrated in front of an audience, the Chepang *pande* rarely feel that their lives are in danger. However, in violent lucid dreams experienced only privately, the somatic effects of these dreamed fights are dramatic and, in most cases, lead to serious illness, and possibly the death of one of the individuals.

As we have seen, dreams play a fundamental role in Chepang culture. Indeed, the *pande* told me that they are able to communicate among themselves even during nonaggressive dreams. When I was working with the shaman Krishora, the protagonist of the first story, she was the *guru* of her nephew Jaman, who was still receiving initiatory dreams from the supernatural world. Very rarely does a human *guru* participate in the future *pande*'s learning process that takes place mostly in the course of dreams, but in this case Krishora told me:

> I am his *guru*: I teach him things in dreams and I make my divinity ride him. During the dreams I am not in the same room as him: when Jaman is dreaming, I can be at my home and it is my mind that goes to seek him out. If he needs me during the dreams, I help him in a way which is not visible.[17]

Jaman was present at the conversation between Krishora and me and confirmed that in the night, during dream time, he often used to have lessons with his aunt. During my research, I had the opportunity to observe that Krishora and Jaman often discussed the dreams they had shared during the night.

Despite the fact that, in most cases, their dreams were not revealed to me in detail, all the *pande* told me that the two rivals meet in a parallel reality when both of them are sleeping. The two rivals never meet in person and interact in the course of violent dreams. The Chepang and the *pande* in particular always talk about themselves as "peaceful, good people" and deny the existence of "dark shamans" among them.[18] Violence and magical assaults are forbidden by Chepang social regulations and are relegated to a parallel, oneiric reality experienced on a personal level in the course of lucid dreams capable of producing physical damage and even the death of a rival.

These cases raise many questions, including the possibility of distance communication in dream states among human beings, which has yet to be contemplated by Western science.

Dreams of Transformation or Denied Violence: The Semang-Negrito (Peninsular Malaysia)

Of the first studies dedicated to the role of dreams among indigenous groups, the ones conducted in Peninsular Malaysia during the 1950s on Orang Asli or "Original People" generated remarkable insights and new debates in academic and nonacademic environments. In particular, Kilton Stewart's works on the Senoi offered a highly romanticized depiction of their dream theory and their supposedly totally peaceful lifestyle, which later encountered much criticism.[19]

In his work, anthropologist and psychologist Stewart described the Senoi morning custom of dream-telling as the main means of avoiding conflict, disease, and mental disorders, and of pursuing happiness, harmony, and well-being. The author was so astonished by this hunter-gatherer group's use of refined psychological methods as to compare them with an alien race that might have come from another planet. In the beginning, his studies generated

enthusiasm among a generation of anthropologists (among others in society) who were experiencing a state of deep crisis of Western values especially in relation to the Vietnam War. Since the 1980s, however, new research has suggested that there was no evidence of any morning dream-telling custom among the Senoi and that what Stewart described was nothing but a sort of utopian fairy tale.[20] Actually, to a certain degree, the controversy is still open. It is undeniable that Stewart's description of the Senoi dream complex and its mastering is highly utopian and not confirmed by scientific observation. As in the writings of Carlos Castaneda, published during the same historical period, the idealization of pure, innocent peoples was probably generated largely by Western needs and sense of uncertainty. Nevertheless, Stewart's observations on Senoi techniques to avoid interpersonal conflicts and the importance of dream sharing, even if not institutionalized in the shape of a daily morning custom, probably deserve more serious attention.

While these debates dealt mostly with the Senoi, little was written on another of the three Orang Asli subgroups—the Semang-Negrito—which include six different ethnic groups: Batek, Jahai, Mendriq, Kintak, Lanoh, and Kensiu. For the past few years I have been conducting research among the Batek and Jahai, focusing on their traditional medicine; this line of research also allowed me to investigate the importance attributed to dreams. Among these populations, dreams and altered states of consciousness are considered to be almost one and the same.

While 400 to 500 Batek still engage in a nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle in the Taman Negara National Park, other Batek and Jahai are now sedentary. Both groups are characterized by nonhierarchical, egalitarian social structures typical of hunter-gatherer communities. Despite the fact that shamanism is in decline due to the problematic encounter with Islam, the official religion of the country, some shamans (called *halak* in Batek and *jampi* in Jahai) are still able to resolve the problems of their companions. Moreover, quite recently and immediately after the death of Macang, the older and more respected shaman in their community, a few young boys among the nomadic Batek started to receive initiatory dreams.

The Batek and Jahai can be considered nonviolent peoples. Violence and aggression are both banned and feared. Shamans' actions are much less dramatic and violent than in other shamanic complexes the world over, and the shamanic journey takes place in the course of lucid dreamlike states in the

jungle, which is considered the most beautiful and sacred place in the universe. The jungle, and only the jungle, represents the shamanic cosmos even for the sedentary communities.[21]

In Batek and Jahai shamanism, the personal dimension predominates over the social one. Public ceremonies are nowadays performed rarely and *halak* and *jampi* are mostly solitary figures. As occurs with the Chepang, the call to the profession and the entire learning process take place during dreams where the future shamans receive therapeutic songs that are strictly personal and kept secret most of the time. Probably because of the taboo against violence in any form, all the shamans I talked to declared that their lucid dreams/ASCs never involve magical fights with other humans, and that these states are always extremely pleasant, at least as long as they experience them in human form.

Batek and Jahai feel a deep brotherhood with all living creatures of the pluvial jungle. In fact, the most powerful *halak* and *jampi* are said to be able to change their human form into that of animals and plants. According to testimonies collected by Endicott in the 1970s, during the night Batek *halak* send their shadow-souls into tiger bodies and wander the forest in this guise.[22] As soon as the shaman falls asleep, his shadow-soul abandons the human body and enters that of the tiger. At daybreak, the shadow-soul returns to the human body while the tiger goes to sleep in secret areas of the jungle.

In general, the activities of the tiger-shamans are considered to be positive, as they play the role of defenders, protecting their companions from the attack of wild animals. But in some cases, the shamans are called to fight against other creatures. Moreover, if the tiger-shaman wandering in the jungle meets a hunter or falls into a trap, the destiny of his human body will be exactly the same of that of the tiger; the consequences can include serious injuries and even death. Despite the fact that my informants always tended to emphasize the positive actions of tiger-shamans, they also told me that—even if only on rare occasions—they can kill other beings in self-defense. These accounts recall the well-known studies of Reichel-Dolmatoff on jaguar-shamans in the Amazon area who in this guise are exempt from their societies' rigid regulations.[23] In fact, the Amazonian jaguar-shamans can kill and eat other human beings and can even rape women of their own group to satisfy their instincts.

According to my Batek and Jahai informants, the transformation into

animals mainly occurs when the individuals are sleeping. All of these informants noted that they were perfectly aware that they were sleeping and in perfect control of their actions. In these lucid dreams they seem to acquire an animal nature and sensory system over and above their human dimension. As pointed out by Barbara Tedlock, during lucid dreaming "complex synesthesias—visual, auditory, and tactile—often occur as a new dream entity emerges."[24]

Just few months before his death, *halak* Macang (Figure 4.3) told me that when he was in his tiger body, he could still "think and feel as a man," but at the same time he could "think and feel as a tiger." His sight, hearing, and smell became much more acute. He could even understand and talk the tigers' language, which is a telepathic language in the sense that—according to the old shaman—tigers communicate among themselves without emitting many vocal sounds but just looking each other in the eyes.

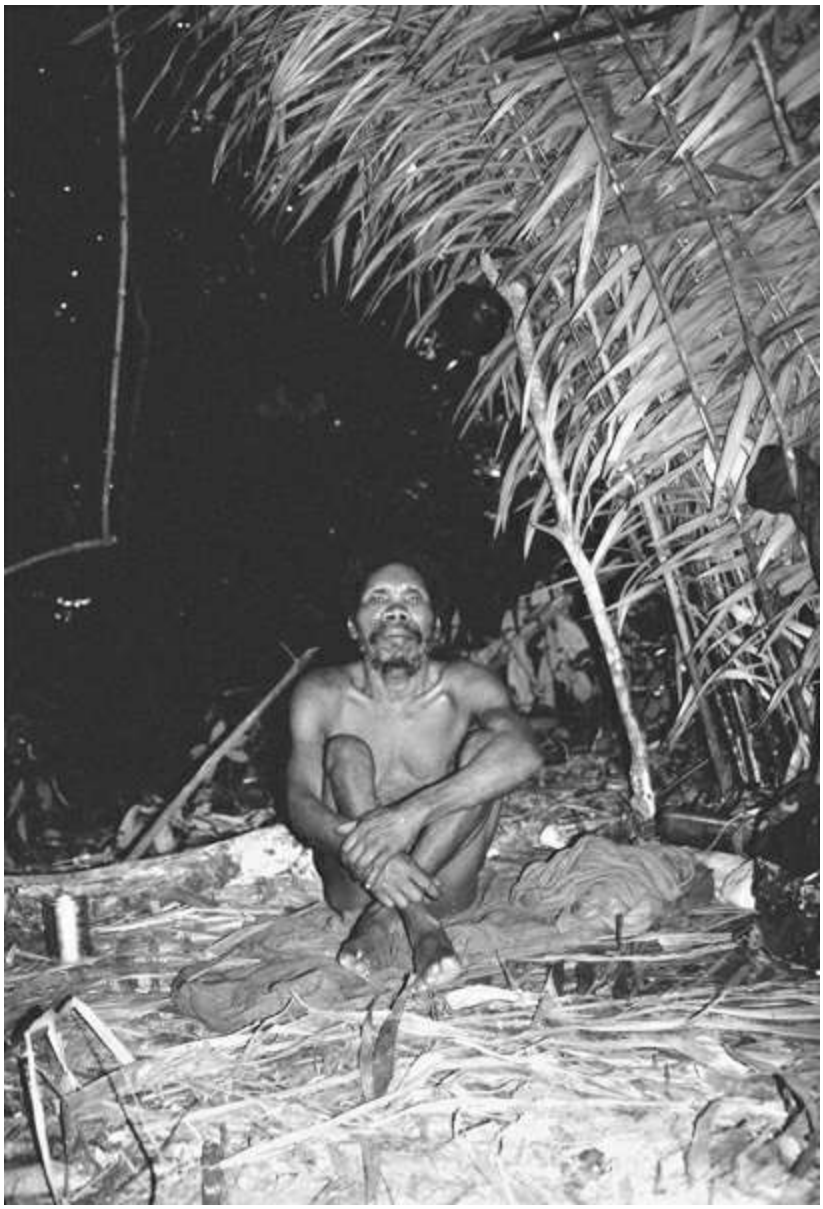

Figure 4.3.
Halak Macang, one of the last Batek shaman-tigers.
(D. Riboli, Taman Negara, Malaysia, 2005)

Recently I was told by a young Batek man who has been receiving initiatory dreams for a few years that there is at least one case in which the tiger-shamans fight to death: when they meet the *Sakai Pangan*. These tigers have supernatural powers and can change their animal form, something like an inversed lycanthropy in which the animal acquires a human nature. The Sakai Pangan are considered to be very dangerous, even though they prefer to avoid any contact with human beings and hide in deep caves in the jungle most of the day. If they decide to attack and kill a victim, they can do so by

using either their tiger form or their human one, or even a combination of the two.

It should be noted that the terms "Sakai" and "Pangan" have both been used in the past by other communities as general terms to refer to indigenous groups in Malaysia, before their name was changed in 1966 to "Orang Asli."[25] "Sakai," in particular, is a derogatory term that means "slave" and "to serve," while "Pangan" is used in the sense of "men of the forest." Note that the dangerous creatures discussed here are referred to by the names once used for the Batek and the Jahai. It is tempting to argue that the Sakai Pangan probably represent a mirror image of the Batek and the Jahai, symbolizing the violence and aggressiveness denied and socially rejected in their culture.

Another interesting point is that shamans are seen as almost supernatural beings. As mentioned previously, they are referred to by the Batek, and sometimes also by the Jahai, as *halak*, but this same term is used to indicate all supernatural beings. Sometimes, when used as an adjective, it may also be attributed to tigers.

Cases in which shamans fight with a Sakai Pangan appear to be particularly complicated. On the one hand, we have a man with supernatural powers—the *halak*—who is a member of an egalitarian society where violence in any form is taboo. This man can transform into a tiger and the transformation takes place in the night when the shaman sleeps, aware of the fact that he is dreaming but also knowing that the dream opens the door to another reality, in which it is possible for him to wander in the forest in feline form. When the shadow-soul abandons the body, the *halak* have out-of-body experiences as they can see themselves asleep before entering the body of the tiger. When they become tigers, they also maintain their human nature and, as they say, "walk in their dreams," indicating with this expression what we call lucid dreams and altered states of consciousness.

On the other hand, we have the legends of the Sakai Pangan, in which tigers change into human form at will. These beings are not solitary like real felines. In fact, they are believed to live in groups and have a chief/king, which means that their society is not egalitarian and that their social regulations are different from Batek and Jahai social regulations. The Sakai Pangan try to avoid contact with humans but if for some reason they do encounter one, they feel they must attack and kill the human. Unfortunately, none of my informants was sure if the Sakai Pangan fall asleep before

changing their form.

Sometimes the Sakai Pangan are said to be able to enter the dream of a future victim to warn her of danger, although there is no explanation of the motives behind this warning. One of my informants, P., told me that almost 30 years ago, when he was still young, he decided to go to the forest for a few days with his wife and his son, who was almost two at the time. One night he dreamed of a huge tiger but did not pay any attention to the dream. The following day, after returning to the camp from hunting, he heard his wife screaming. A big tiger had already killed his son and in few seconds also killed his wife. P. never remarried and told me that in all these years he has never been able to forgive himself for not listening to his dream, which—he is sure—was sent to him by the same Sakai Pangan who killed his family.

If a *halak* who is "walking in his dream" meets a Sakai Pangan, the fight cannot be avoided and ends with the death of one of the two protagonists. Interestingly, many Batek and Jahai describing the Sakai Pangan told me that even when these creatures are in their tiger forms, their faces can be human. Their physical features never resemble those of the Batek or of the Jahai, but rather the faces of the Malay. The fact that negativity and the most extreme forms of violence are expressed in the dream by wild creatures with a social organization and somatic features similar to those of the individuals belonging to the dominant culture in the country is reminiscent of similar studies conducted in South America on dream symbolism among the Mehinaku of Central Brazil; in this group, Westerners are often the protagonists in dreams of death.[26]

That the Sakai Pangan assume Malay human features does not necessarily contradict the theory that they represent a mirror image of the Batek and Jahai societies, according to which the dangerous, evil, and violent are always perceived, or at least narrated, as belonging to an outside, totally different world. In these lucid dreams, the animal and the human spheres interact but while the *halak*'s violent acts occur when the shaman takes the animal form, the violence of the Sakai Pangan seems to be more related to his human features.

Conclusions and Personal Experience

When engaged in my fieldwork in Asia, I notice that I often experience and remember more vivid and even lucid dreams than when I am in Europe. Among these dreams, one in particular remains especially vivid in my memory, even at a sensorial level, despite the fact that I experienced it more than 15 years ago. At that time I was working in Central and Southern Nepal among the Chepang and, for the past two years, had been particularly helped in my research by Krishora, the shaman protagonist of one of the magical fights I described in the first section of this chapter.

One night I attended a dramatic therapeutic séance celebrated by the *pande* for a sick girl. Krishora entered intense altered states of consciousness, during which she fought against dangerous supernatural beings until she was exhausted. During the struggle, she twice fell unconscious into a state of apparent death, scaring all the participants. The séance ended about 3 o'clock in the morning after the painful revelation by Krishora that nothing could be done. The supernatural beings had not agreed to release the soul of the girl, who had only a few months to live. Before going to sleep, she warned me that it would be a difficult and dangerous night; she also told me that, in case of danger, she would come to help me.

I went to sleep with a sense of sadness and oppression, in another house almost 10 kilometers away from Krishora's residence. I started to dream as soon as I fell asleep.

> *I was totally aware that I was sleeping and dreaming and in the beginning I had an out-of-body experience, observing my sleeping body from outside. But soon I started to hear loud noises and see flashes of colored light. Both the sounds and the colors of the light were totally new to my senses and particularly frightening. This is very difficult to describe. In the dream I started to run in an attempt to avoid the colors and noises, which also had a material, tangible dimension and which were hitting me like blunt objects. I felt scared but also very angry about what was happening. I stopped and started to fight furiously thinking that I had to find a way to reenter and wake up my sleeping body.*
>
> *At a certain point, I felt a dangerous presence that was different and more frightening than the flashes of colors and the noises. Among the indescribable colors that moved rapidly and wildly around me, I discerned a terrifying figure, half feline and half something else that, again, I am not able to describe in detail despite the fact that I still remember it clearly. I suddenly felt that the flashes of colors and the noises were extensions of the limbs of the figure attacking me. I felt doomed and even angrier with myself for not being able to wake up. My only comforting thought was probably generated by my Western rationality that reminded me that—after all—it was not possible to die in a dream. I was almost ready to give up when I saw Krishora behind the figure with a furious but calm and firm expression in her eyes.*

I finally woke up with a burning sensation all over my sweaty body. It

was already morning and I went to take a shower. To my surprise, as soon as I undressed I saw in the mirror that my chest and my back were marked by numerous red marks and a few deeper scratches, which looked like superficial blows from a feline's paws. In the evening I went to see Krishora, who, as soon as I entered her house, told me, "You see? I told you I'd come to help you."

For a few days I was slightly feverish and felt very weak. While recovering, I reflected on how lucid violent dreams could affect the body, provoking injuries and, in the case of shamanic fights, even death.

I must admit that I failed to find an explanation for the scratches that appeared on my body after the dream, the visible marks of what could be defined an extraordinary experience. I discussed the event with my father, a psychiatrist, who told me that it could have been a case of dermographism due to an intense emotional condition, although in my life I was never affected by this pathology and have not had a similar experience since then. Actually, I think I finally accepted what Chepang *pande* used to tell me: that we cannot—and probably must not—try to explain everything.

I am still puzzling today over how much the researcher can be affected, even on a methodological level, by lucid dreams occurring during fieldwork. This sort of inquiry is a central challenge for the new anthropology of extraordinary experience in which the relevance of the ethnographer's emotions and personal experience, which encompass invisible and unspoken aspects, is debated.[27] The scientific community is probably unable to easily accept similar experiences as a kind of participant-observation. Nevertheless, I feel, in an almost subconscious way that is difficult to explain, that it was not merely participant-observation, but rather "participant action and interaction." In this sense, my lucid dream also gave me personal insight into the debate regarding how unexpressed or denied violence manifests itself on a level that is not limited to the sphere of the subconscious. I consider myself a peaceful person, but in the dream I experienced an unprecedented violence stemming from some hidden part of my being. I was not just fighting in self-defense, and despite the fact that I was scared, I also felt very powerful and certainly not in an ordinary state of consciousness.

During that lucid dream, feelings in normal life that are perceived as completely opposite or at least conflicting merged to give a totally and almost exciting new sensorial experience: I was fearful and fearless, weak and

strong, impotent and powerful, human and other-than-human, all at the same time.[28] Of course, I cannot state with certainty that shamans have the same feelings during their violent lucid dreams, as we do not really know how much the personal dimension, story, and experience play a role in these kinds of states or even in the memories we have after experiencing lucid dreams, altered states of consciousness, or dreamed altered states of consciousness.

In fact, all the states—lucid dreams, ASCs experienced in the waking time, and ASCs occurring in dreams—are interrelated. Perhaps they might be envisioned as Chinese boxes, the one containing the other. Probably, a particular combination of these nested boxes, still unknown to Western studies, affects both the psychological and physical health of a person. Shamans—during aggressive lucid dreams—are among the rare individuals who can deal with all these levels, maintaining a certain control on their emotional, psychophysiological, and sensorial sets, which communicate and interact in a complex way that undoubtedly deserves further study.

Notes

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11. The trident, symbol of the god Shiva.
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5

Forgotten Perspectives on Lucid Dreaming from the Enlightenment through the Early Twentieth Century

Chris Olsen

In 1968, a British parapsychologist named Celia Green published a book about a very unusual type of dream. In these dreams, the dreamer is aware of dreaming. Green's book, titled *Lucid Dreams*, was full of dream narratives that tested the credibility of most readers who were not familiar with this dream state. Lucid dreamers reported flying swiftly through the air, consciously determining the direction of the dream's events, observing their vivid surroundings with remarkable clarity, and experiencing intense feelings of exhilaration and freedom.

While the field of lucid dreaming has developed in many significant directions since Green drew attention to this type of dream in the late 1960s, one area of scholarship has remained remarkably stagnant. We know little more about the English-language history of lucid dreaming since Green drew attention to a handful of mostly occult and parapsychological sources. In the past 45 years, a small number of articles have made some contributions to the known history of lucid dreaming in the English-speaking world.[1] However, the basic portrait of the pre-20th-century history of lucid dreaming is still assumed to include only occult practices, British psychical research, and a handful of brief and scattered references.

This portrait is inaccurate. There is, in fact, a mostly unknown English-language history of lucid dreaming that extensively spans several centuries. In 2011, I completed my dissertation, *The Historical Emergence of the Lucid Dreaming State within the United States and the United Kingdom*, which brings to light substantial new strands of the history of lucid dreaming.This chapter is a condensed and significantly revised update of my dissertation, selectively highlighting some of the major themes and figures in the history

of lucid dreaming. Although the primary focus is on the English-language history of lucid dreaming, I have also provided background information that highlights some of the non-English thinkers who had the most direct influence on the historical emergence of the lucid dreaming concept in the United States and the United Kingdom.

This largely unknown history of lucid dreaming can be more fully appreciated by placing it within the broader context of certain recent developments in the history of Western esotericism and related fields. At approximately the same time that lucid dreaming began to attract considerable attention, a tradition of historical research was emerging that would change the way many scholars perceived and related to a host of esoteric subjects and marginalized psychological topics. Frances A. Yates and Henri Ellenberger were two of the most notable pioneers of this tradition.[2] They influenced a new generation of scholars who embraced the challenge of studying the histories of a variety of poorly understood intellectual themes and traditions that sometimes intertwined with the history of lucid dreaming.

This new development within the histories of religion, Western esotericism, philosophy, and psychology has significant implications for research into the history of lucid dreaming. The current perception of the English-language history of lucid dreaming has been heavily influenced by its controversial association with occult and parapsychological texts. Lucid dreaming's link to these marginalized fields has done little to encourage the discovery of the full scope and contemporary relevance of the historical background of lucid dreaming. The increased interest in the history of Western esotericism and related fields provides opportunities to examine the history of lucid dreaming from a rich variety of contexts and perspectives.

In researching the little-known history of this fascinating dream state, I have developed an appreciation of how thoroughly my own understanding of lucid dreaming is shaped by a host of present-day assumptions and perspectives that I have inherited, many of which lie partly or completely beyond my conscious awareness. This appreciation has led me to believe that the history of lucid dreaming represents a vast, untapped resource for expanding what we know about the nature of dreams and consciousness, as well as the relevance of lucid dreaming to the human condition.

This chapter is not intended to be a definitive or exhaustive historical

overview. Many indigenous cultures, religious dream communities, and esoteric secret societies possessed oral dream traditions that left little trace of their activities in the print material of their time. Consequently, their presence is severely underrepresented in my research. I do not cover the entire English-language history in this chapter. Rather, somewhat arbitrarily, we begin with three figures from the Enlightenment. The Scottish philosopher Thomas Reid, the Swedish scientist and mystic Emanuel Swedenborg, and the German physician Franz Anton Mesmer all had an enormous impact on the way in which lucid dreaming was perceived in the 19th century. These three thinkers lay the foundation for a brief survey of lucid dreaming and related discussions in phrenology, mesmerism and hypnosis, spiritualism, occultism, psychical research, and the psychology of the unconscious. The chapter ends with an exploration of the Dutch writer Frederik van Eeden and an analysis of why his lucid dreams had such a profound influence on his waking life.

The Enlightenment

The Enlightenment was a philosophical and cultural movement that did very little to promote an appreciation of dreams. This was an unfortunate by-product of the fact that Enlightenment thinkers emphasized reason and science as the primary means of improving the welfare of society. Enlightenment reformers denounced superstition and sought plausible rational explanations for miracles, witchcraft, demon possession, and other phenomena commonly given supernatural interpretations. Many of the underlying assumptions supporting popular dream practices eroded during this crusade against superstition.

The most prominent Enlightenment writers emphasized rational, materialistic causes of dreaming. These authors commonly viewed perfect sleep as the absence of dreaming, which was regarded as an impaired form of thinking and was often compared to drunkenness and madness.[3] In the midst of this cultural movement that exalted the reasoning faculty as experienced in waking consciousness, a handful of discussions about being aware of dreaming began to appear in one prominent Scottish philosophical school. These discussions would profoundly inform the way in which many dreamers

made sense of lucid dreaming in the 19th century.[4]

Scottish Common Sense Philosophy

Thomas Reid

In the mid-1720s, a teenage boy from the northeastern coast of Scotland began to have nightmares. Almost every evening he dreamed of being chased or found himself on the verge of some calamity like falling from a great height or being devoured by a wild animal. He would awaken in a panic, and it took him some time each morning to compose himself. This distress would stay with him for a good part of the day. He was most troubled by the cowardly behavior that he demonstrated in these nightly terrors. This cowardice contrasted starkly with his daydreams of gallant adventures in which he indulged during his solitary evening walks. Eventually, he devised a plan for ridding himself of these nightmares.

> I thought it was worth trying whether it was possible to recollect that it was all a dream, and that I was in no real danger. I often went to sleep with my mind as strongly impressed as I could with this thought, that I never in my lifetime was in any real danger, and that every fright I had was a dream. After many fruitless endeavours to recollect this when the danger appeared I effected it at last, and have often, when I was sliding over a precipice into the abyss, recollected that it was all a dream, and boldly jumped down. The effect of this commonly was, that I immediately awoke. But I awoke calm and intrepid, which I thought a great acquisition. After this, my dreams were never very uneasy; and, in a short time, I dreamed not at all.[5]

This young boy would become one of the most influential philosophers of the Enlightenment. Thomas Reid's adolescent dream was the most frequently cited lucid dream of the 19th century.[6] In the first half of his adult life, Reid was a little-known Presbyterian minister and professor of philosophy in Aberdeen, Scotland. His rise to international prominence was first set in motion when he cofounded the Aberdeen Philosophical Society in 1758. The members of this group were not favorably disposed to the philosophical skepticism of their Scottish contemporary David Hume.[7] Their opposition to Hume would eventually result in the formation of a tremendously influential philosophical response to skepticism known as Common Sense philosophy. Reid and his colleagues believed skepticism represented a grave threat to Christian society because it undermined the foundations of morality.

Reid's response to Hume's skepticism centered on a critique of a thought tradition that he traced back to Descartes. Reid was opposed to Descartes's theory of establishing ideas as a mediator between human perception and the external world. In Reid's estimation, this led to an unbreachable philosophical gulf between inner experience and the external material world. Reid traced the growing consequences of this Cartesian error through the empiricism of Locke, the idealism of Berkeley, and finally the skepticism of Hume.[8]

In response, Reid affirmed the principles of Common Sense, the set of basic beliefs and assumptions held by the common person in every culture. One of the most important of Reid's Common Sense assumptions was the belief in the sturdy correspondence between internal perception and the external environment. Reid argued that the human mind did not need Descartes's ideas to serve as a mediator between the inner and outer worlds. Instead, he believed the mind possessed innate faculties of conception that directly engaged with the external environment. His affirmation of the perceptive and discriminating powers of the human mind is reflected in his adult retelling of his teenage victories over his nightmares through becoming aware that he was dreaming. In developing this theory of the capacities of the human mind, Reid revived an old psychological concept known as *faculty psychology*. As will later be demonstrated, phrenology would evolve as an international 19th-century movement that produced many references to lucid dreaming that were implicitly rooted in the theory of faculty psychology.

James Beattie

Reid was not actually the first member of the Aberdeen group to publicly discuss the idea of being aware of dreaming. That precedent apparently belongs to the Society's youngest member, James Beattie, who introduced lucid dreaming into the philosophical debate between skepticism and realism, and developed perhaps the earliest Enlightenment-era theory of dreams that featured the concept of lucid dreaming.[9]

Beattie was still in his mid-twenties when he was elected to become a member of the Aberdeen group, three years after it was founded. The precocious philosopher and poet had already attained a professorship at Marischal College. Over the next decade the Aberdeen group would be a place of support for Beattie as he developed his ideas. This support was

greatly needed. He found that the stress involved in writing his first book, *An Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth*, frequently made him physically ill. However, his efforts paid off, as the public reception to *An Essay* was tremendous.[10] The book secured the young professor a meeting with the king, a royal pension, and a doctorate from Oxford University. Beattie's prominence was short lived, however. Critical opinion of his work grew more negative as a larger number of writers regarded his work as less profound and original than of his older colleague, Thomas Reid.

Despite this fall from prominence, Beattie's essay contains an intriguing philosophical position that could retrospectively be called the Lucid Dream Argument. This argument is a rebuttal to the more well-known Dream Argument, which asserts that the common mistaken assumption in dreams that we are awake casts doubt on the reliability of our senses. Beattie argued that this mistaken assumption made by dreamers is the fault of the dreaming mind, which is mentally impaired, rather than being derived from the human mind itself. He reasoned that the occasional appearance of sound judgment in the form of knowing that one is dreaming demonstrates that the Dream Argument is related to the specific issue of dream-induced mental impairment, as opposed to the more general issue of the epistemological unreliability of the senses:

> Had we the command of our understanding and memory in sleep, we would probably be sensible, that the appearances of our dreams are all delusive: which, in fact, is sometimes the case; at least I have sometimes been conscious, that my dream was a dream: and when it was disagreeable, have actually made efforts to awake myself, which have succeeded.[11]

In the following decade, Beattie published *Dissertations, Moral and Critical*, which contained a chapter on dreams that included a description of one of his lucid dreams. Beattie's dream contains striking parallels to Reid's lucid dream of jumping over a precipice.

> I dreamed once, that I was walking on the parapet of a high bridge. How I came there, I do not know: but, recollecting that I had never been given to pranks of that nature, I began to think it might be a dream: and finding my situation uneasy, and delirious to get rid of so troublesome an idea, I threw myself headlong, in the belief, that the shock of the fall would restore my senses; which happened accordingly.[12]

This lucid dream account is found in Beattie's overview of his general theory of dreaming, which anticipated positive psychology in its emphasis on

the beneficial uses of dreams. This affirmation of the purposeful benefits of dreams stands out against other Enlightenment writers who commonly likened dreams to drunkenness and madness.

Franz Joseph Gall

One scientist who was heavily influenced by Reid's faculty psychology was the Austrian physicist Franz Joseph Gall. He drew heavily on Reid's arguments as he developed his theory of phrenology, which contained the core assumption that various mental faculties were correlated with the shape of the skull.

According to the early 19th-century magnetist M. Loewe, Gall wrote about the idea of "dubitation in dreaming."[13] Loewe asserts, "Dreaming persons are often doubtful (even in their dreams) whether their ideas are real, or only a dream."[14] Loewe refers to Gall's explanation for this phenomenon —namely, that "one half of the brain is dreaming, and the other half perfectly awake."[15] This would be the first of many 19th-century references to lucid dreaming found in phrenological literature, of which a selective handful of sources will be discussed in this chapter.[16] This prevalence is at least partly explained by the fact that phrenologists were interested in delineating discrete states of consciousness so that they could more accurately correlate them with the unique configuration of bumps and depressions present on the surface of an individual's skull.

Gall's most influential disciple was Johann Spurzheim, who was primarily responsible for the dissemination of phrenology throughout England and the United States.[17] The Irish physician Andrew Carmichael became one of Spurzheim's most ardent advocates. Carmichael's theory of dreaming included a spectrum of mental states on the wake-sleep continuum. In one of Carmichael's mental states, lucid dreaming frequently occurs.

For Carmichael, sleep was best understood not as rest prompted by fatigue, but rather as a state in which vital and restorative processes occur. Through his dream theory Carmichael believed he identified the mechanism that largely determines whether a dreamer is aware of dreaming. According to Carmichael, when the senses are asleep, one's connection with the external world is severed, depriving an individual of the ability to distinguish between dream thoughts and the external world. However, when one sense organ,

such as hearing or touch, is awake and partially functioning, the phenomenon of "dreaming that we are dreaming" may occur.[18] Specifically, the dreamer becomes aware of dreaming.

Common Sense Philosophy in the United States

The ideas of Reid, Beattie, and other Scottish Common Sense philosophers migrated to the United States in the late 18th century, where their impact would be enormous. According to Alkana, "The overwhelming influence of Common Sense philosophy on 19th-century American thought is undisputed: From the start of the 19th century until the arrival of German physiology and British empiricism during the 1860s, the Common Sense dominance over American psychology was unchallenged, and its influence, albeit attenuated, endured through the remainder of the century."[19]

The Common Sense philosopher John Abercrombie played a major role in the dissemination of Reid's and Beattie's references to being aware of dreaming. He published *An Inquiry Concerning the Intellectual Powers: And the Investigation of Truth* in 1830. This book became an extremely popular college textbook.[20] Many subsequent references to lucid dreaming cite Abercrombie and present the substance of his interpretation of lucid dreaming.

Abercrombie recounts the lucid dreams of Beattie and Reid in his discussion of a "very peculiar state" in which one is having a distressing dream and simultaneously has "an impression that it is probably only a dream."[21] He surmises that this state "has perhaps occurred to most people."[22] He then recounts the dreams of Beattie and Reid, explaining how they became aware of dreaming and threw themselves from a great height as a way to awaken themselves from their distressing dreams. Abercrombie does not mention that Beattie implied only some of his lucid dreams were disagreeable. His references to the lucid dreams of Beattie and Reid were cited by a wide variety of writers in the 1830s and 1840s, and represented the mainstream view of the nature and limits of the lucid dream state in the early Victorian era.[23]

In the second half of the 19th century, the renowned physician William Carpenter replaced Reid as the most authoritative and frequently cited lucid dreaming reference. In some ways, these references to Carpenter represent a

continuation of the writings that cited Reid's and Beattie's references to lucid dreaming. However, unlike the Common Sense lucid dreaming references that immediately preceded him, Carpenter emphasized a more balanced attitude, suggesting that the dreamer "may even make a voluntary and successful effort to prolong them if agreeable, or to dissipate them if unpleasing."[24]

Certain voices in the medical community viewed this potential Carpenter describes for lucidly prolonging pleasurable dreams in unfavorable terms. In *The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs in Childhood, Youth, Adult Age, and Advanced Life, Considered in Their Physiological, Social, and Moral Relations*, the British physician William Acton included a section entitled "Nocturnal Emissions and Pollutions, Wet Dreams."[25] In this section, Acton quotes Carpenter's passage on being conscious of dreaming in his discussion of the respective roles of volitional will in both dreaming and sexual emissions. Acton considered wet dreams to be one type of disorder related to sexual emission, if the symptom occurred frequently and was accompanied by negative consequences, as he believed was often the case. Acton argued that most wet dreams occur in Carpenter's type of dreaming in which volition is present: "The modified power of control by will does, I believe, almost invariably exist in lascivious dreams."[26] Echoing Carpenter's description of the lucid dreamer's ability to prolong or dissipate dreams, Acton warns that in "lascivious" dreams, one can "shorten as well as prolong the ejaculatory act."[27]

In *Plain Facts for the Old and Young*, the American doctor and co-inventor of corn flakes cereal, John Harvey Kellogg, elaborated on Acton's ideas about the role of lucid dreaming in preventing nocturnal emissions.[28] He also quoted Carpenter's description of the dreamer being conscious of dreaming and argued that dreams can be controlled to a remarkable extent. Kellogg believed that "a large share of emissions occur in the state described by Dr. Carpenter, in which a certain amount of control by the will is possible."[29] The condemnation of masturbation and wet dreams along the lines expressed by Acton and Kellogg was a popular sentiment of this time, and these two physicians were regarded as prominent leaders in this crusade against sexual self-stimulation. Their discussions of lucid dreaming helped to popularize their particular perspective on and attitude toward being aware of dreaming.

The Covert Enlightenment

In the polarized struggle between science and religion, a movement arose during the Enlightenment that occupied a middle ground between these two forces. Alfred Gabay has given this movement the name the Covert Enlightenment.[30] Emanuel Swedenborg and Franz Anton Mesmer were at the center of this movement. Through their lives and influence, older esoteric traditions would be transmitted, yet also transformed. In different ways, both men extended the values and practices of experimental science more deeply into esoteric domains. Many lucid dreamers in the 19th century drew heavily from the contributions of Mesmer and Swedenborg to help them make sense of this phenomenon of being aware of dreaming.

Emanuel Swedenborg

About two decades after young Thomas Reid of Scotland began having nightmares, the 55-year-old Swedish scientist Emanuel Swedenborg went on a journey. He purchased a travel diary to record notes on the people and places he visited on his way to Holland to oversee the publication of his latest scientific work. Although the book was published, Swedenborg's scientific endeavors would eventually be abandoned. In the midst of his travels, he experienced a series of dreams and visions that would culminate in a new life orientation. The devout philosopher-scientist devoted the rest of his life to exploring and writing about the spiritual realms and divine revelations that first opened up to him during these other-worldly travels.[31]

These later writings of Swedenborg contain an extremely complex and nuanced spiritual and philosophical system of thought, which could be somewhat oversimplified as a synthesis of Renaissance esotericism and Enlightenment rationality.[32] The extraordinary depth of this synthesis reflects the mind of a man who was a highly accomplished scientist and philosopher. The considerable influence of Swedenborg's writings on Western thinking is hard to fully appreciate or gauge because his ideas were often transmitted through marginalized cultural movements. However, his influence on the history of lucid dreaming is unmistakable and profound. The impact of Swedenborg's highly rational and lucid experiences of dreams and visions

reverberated throughout 19th century in many ways, informing such diverse figures as the animal magnetists, spiritualistic mediums, and occult magicians of that era.

The core of Swedenborg's enormous influence on the Western understanding of dream consciousness rests in his status, alongside Mesmer, as arguably the most influential channel of Western esotericism from the Enlightenment through the modern era. Hanegraff has somewhat critically characterized Swedenborg's philosophy of nature as "a momentous shift in perspective which touches the heart of the esoteric worldview and is essential for understanding the nature of occultism."[33] Occultism is a specific movement within Western esotericism that would prominently feature lucid dreaming as a type of magical practice. The role Swedenborg played in the rise of occultism is centrally related to why he is a seminal figure in the history of lucid dreaming.

Swedenborg's monumental impact on the history of esotericism is closely related to the fact that for the first several decades of his adult life he was a highly acclaimed scientist. He stands apart from Boehme, Eckhart, and other earlier mystics in the degree to which he carried his scientific sensibilities into his later exploration of spiritual realms. Lamm observes that Swedenborg "notes day by day the spiritual phenomena of which he is the object with the same scrupulous exactitude that he has previously applied to scientific observations."[34] The "scientific observation" of his dreams and visions implies a lucid awareness of the state of consciousness he is observing. At times this lucidity is explicitly verbalized by Swedenborg.

The dreams Swedenborg experienced during his life-altering experiences in his fifties were often characterized by extremely high levels of mental clarity. For example, on the night of April 24 and 25, 1744, Swedenborg reports having the following dream: "I was through the whole night, nearly eleven hours, neither asleep nor awake, in a curious trance. I knew I was dreaming, but my thoughts were kept bound, which made me sweat."[35]

Swedenborg would later articulate a theory of visions and dreams in which the concept of dream lucidity plays a prominent role. In an essay titled "Concerning Visions and Dreams; Including Those Which Are Prophetic in the World," Swedenborg distinguishes between the external material world and inner reality, which comprises both the world of spirits and the heaven of the Lord and the angels. He suggests that humans possess internal senses and

faculties that can apprehend and experience inner realms, but they are normally closed to those individuals who are still living in the outer world. According to Swedenborg, dreams are one of three ways in which the interior senses and faculties can be aroused, allowing a person to perceive and be in direct contact with the interior realms of spirits and angels. The other two means of directly contacting the spiritual world are visions and death, which ushers a person into the world of spirits.[36]

For Swedenborg, the degree and quality of dream consciousness, or understanding, depends upon the source of a dream. Inner reality consists of three levels of progressively deeper interiority, beginning with the world of spirits, followed by the heaven of angelic spirits, and finally reaching the heaven of angels and the Lord. Dreams that come from the Lord are the most profound and are called prophetic dreams. Swedenborg goes into considerable detail describing the precise nature of the understanding involved in prophetic dreams and visions. For Swedenborg, the divine prophecy of dreams and visions is an exceedingly lucid state in which

> Those things which have actual existence with spirits are seen in clearer day than the noonday of the world . . . with a perception who they are, also what they are, where they are, whence they come, whither they are going; also what affection, what persuasion, and indeed what faith they are of . . . without any fallacy.[37]

Swedenborg's rational, methodical, and thoroughly lucid sensibilities are illustrated in his description of being taught by angelic spirits the precise way in which dreams "flow in" from heaven. These angelic spirits consciously led him into "a state as of sleep and at the same time as of wakefulness." In this state the angels "insinuated" into a fully aware Swedenborg dreams in which an unknown animal, men, children, and other things of "inexpressible pleasantness" were "presented" to him by the angels.[38]

Franz Anton Mesmer

In 1775, Johann Joseph Gassner, a priest who ranks as one of the greatest faith healers of all time, attracted large crowds and much controversy in Wurttemberg, Germany, with his dramatic demonstrations of healing through exorcism. Distinguished eyewitnesses reported Gassner healing a wide variety of patients. After determining that the illness had a spiritual cause, Gassner would command demons to manifest themselves; his patients

subsequently went into convulsions. He demonstrated the power of orchestrating these convulsions, varying their emotional and physical form as his patients displayed grief, silliness, anger, scrupulosity, and other emotions on command, and moved different parts of their bodies. Having shown mastery over these demons, he decisively expelled them from his patients, curing them of their ailments.[39]

In July of the same year, a physician named Franz Anton Mesmer began following in the wake of Gassner, duplicating his feats while at the same time offering an alternative explanation for his healings. Mesmer's theory involved a fluid that permeated the universe, called *animal magnetism*.[40] The magnetic healer possessed the capacity to manipulate this fluid and direct it toward patients, causing a redistribution of the fluid within the patient's organism. This redistribution of the magnetic fluid was the primary agent of healing in Mesmer's system. Although Mesmer presented his animal magnetism as a scientific innovation, future critics would point out his sizable debt to Western esotericism.

In 1782, with the help of a lawyer and a financer, Mesmer organized in Paris what he called the Society of Harmony, consisting of subscribers who paid large sums of money to learn Mesmer's secret method. The Society was a huge success, and further branches were founded in other French cities and towns.[41] There was a large overlap between these mesmeric societies and Masonic lodges. Several mesmeric groups from Lyons, France, began to evolve in distinctly esoteric directions. As will be shown in the occult section of this chapter, the esoteric branch of mesmerism would have a significant influence on the late 19th-century occultism that produced many discussions about lucid dreaming.

Although sleep and dreaming did not figure prominently in his theory of animal magnetism, Mesmer's contribution to the history of lucid dreaming ranks alongside the monumental impact of Swedenborg. He inaugurated an enormously influential practical tradition of inducing altered states of consciousness. The esoteric mesmerism that emerged in Lyons was not the only mesmeric development that figures prominently in the history of lucid dreaming. A dream-centered theory of hypnosis known as the Nancy School would become the most popular hypnotic perspective in the last two decades of the 19th century.[42] Nancy School hypnotists blurred the boundaries between nocturnal dreams and hypnotic experiences, which they regarded as

a kind of dream. They valued lucid and semi-lucid awareness for its capacity to enable the hypnotic "dreamer" to make meaningful life changes through the power of suggestion.[43]

The trajectory that leads from late 18th-century mesmerism to the late 19th-century Nancy School of hypnosis includes many permutations, a few of which will be very briefly summarized here. An extremely influential innovation to Mesmer's system of healing occurred shortly after the French Royal Commission in 1784 reported in its critical review of mesmerism that phenomena associated with animal magnetism were primarily associated with the imagination of the subject being magnetized as opposed to any physical fluid.[44] While the traditional system pioneered by Mesmer declined in popularity, a new form of animal magnetism emerged, based on the works of Amand-Marie-Jacques de Chastenet, Marquis de Puysegur, whose theories were more aligned with the French Royal Commission's conclusion that imagination played a major role in the results attained by mesmeric practitioners.

In contrast to the convulsions prevalent in Mesmer's subjects, Puysegur's subjects fell into a kind of sleep. Subjects behaved in ways that convinced Puysegur they were having somnambulistic episodes. Consequently, Puysegur named this new form of animal magnetism "artificial somnambulism," so as to distinguish it from natural, or spontaneous, somnambulism. Puysegur also discovered a less common form of somnambulism, where the subject demonstrated clairvoyance as well as mental faculties superior to the patient's waking intellectual functioning. It is particularly significant to the history of lucid dreaming that Puysegur called this form of magnetism *lucid somnambulism*.[45] Puysegur decisively and irrevocably steered Mesmer's movement in the direction of sleep. Future generations would extend this movement into the realm of dreams, and one prominent Nancy School hypnotherapist named Frederik van Eeden would successfully apply the hypnotic concept of suggestion while fully aware in his dreams.[46]

According to Ellenberger, Abbe Faria was the first practitioner to view magnetic phenomena not as sleeping, but as a form of dreaming, thus inferentially endowing dreams with deep psychological and spiritual significance. Faria and others represented the direct lineage of the Nancy School of hypnosis.[47] According to Gauld, "Faria's public demonstrations

were, in several respects, a complete departure from anything that had gone before."[48] In referring to the magnetic state, Faria used the term *lucid sleep*, by which he meant the "dreaming sleep" of magnetized subjects.[49]

Lucid Dreaming in the Second Half of the 19th Century

By the middle of the 19th century, a positivistic ethos had risen to prominence, as science was increasingly emphasized as the preeminent path toward cultural progress. *The Origin of Species* and subsequent books by Charles Darwin would exert a tremendous cultural and philosophical impact, which would result in the theory of evolution becoming a "new mode of thinking." Herbert Spencer's philosophy of evolution, which both rivaled and preceded Darwin's more scientific theory, extended the paradigm of evolution by conceptualizing the domain of the mind as an evolutionary process.[50]

These and other mid-century scientific advances occurred alongside an explosion of interest in communicating with deceased spirits. Spiritualism popularized the figure of the medium, whose self-induced trance states exhibited more volition and initiative than the mesmeric subject, making it a closer relative to the lucid dreamer than the more passive magnetic subject.[51] These cultural changes gradually transformed the way the boundaries of consciousness were conceptualized in the United Kingdom and the United States. Although lucid dreaming references show up in a variety of settings during this time period, this survey will limit itself to those writers who were associated with either spiritualism or the burgeoning psychological discovery of the unconscious.

The Psychology of the Unconscious

Magnetic somnambulism, Romanticism, spiritualism, and other cultural movements presented a challenge to prevailing mainstream models of the mind that left little or no room for unconscious mental processes. The second half of the 19th century witnessed the emergence of more complex theories of the unconscious mind. A thorough review of the evolving mid-Victorian

models of the mind is beyond the scope of this chapter; however, some of the most intriguing lucid dreaming references of this time period offer an insightful glimpse into the ways in which certain writers explored the relationship between dream consciousness and the unconscious mind. A few of the most noteworthy references appear in the periodical *All the Year Round*, which was edited by Charles Dickens.

In 1859 and 1860, an anonymous author who simply went by the name of "The Physician" published two articles in *All the Year Round* containing a theory of dreams in which lucidity figures much more prominently than in the dream theories of Beattie, Carmichael, Carpenter, and Abercrombie. According to this author, "Next to sensation . . . the greater or less degree of consciousness that we retain in dreaming is the truest key to the phenomenon of dreams."[52] In the next paragraph he clearly informs his reader that the phrase "degree of consciousness" relates closely to being aware of dreaming: "According to my degree of consciousness, I say to myself, 'Now this is a dream!' or, 'Well, now this time I don't think I'm dreaming.' "[53]

The Physician articulated a fairly complex theory of the unconscious mind. Dream consciousness is not a pale derivative of waking consciousness, he said. Rather, both mental states derive from a brain that is too vast to be adequately accounted for by the then-popular model of the brain as having two centers, corresponding to its two hemispheres. The anonymous author proposed a much more complex model of the mind.

> But the scenery of the soul is too varied to be accounted for by a mere double action. To trace her phenomena we need that multiplicity of operation which her varied faculties do really imply. Within her consciousness is comprised creation—nay God himself, or all that we can conceive of God. What wonder, then, that the mind can people her own territory, haunt herself, alarm herself, but, above all, amuse herself?[54]

Both his experience and his theory of lucid dreaming within the context of this vast mind are more expansive than those of the dream theorists who preceded the Physician, as the following passage demonstrates:

> In a state of imperfect sleep, that state in which a man says to himself, "I know that this is all a dream," I have sometimes known that I could see nothing of persons or objects, which yet I fancied were around me. Then, by an effort of momentary volition, I have torn open, as it were, my mental eyes, and had a strange burst of light, and a brief revelation of objects, sometimes very beautiful. I remember once dreaming I was climbing up the Acropolis of Athens—which I had never seen—in this sort of mindblindness. Suddenly I reached the top, which I had

> approached from landward, and suddenly the wondrous dream illumination, so strong where it does come, revealed to me the Archipelago, and all its islands, with a distinctness which is even now vivid in my memory.[55]

Almost a decade after the publication of the two dream articles from the anonymous physician, a story appeared in *All The Year Round* titled "A Bed at the Bustard," which prominently featured a lucid dream.[56] This dream is striking in the way that it portrays the dreamer's sense of self as spread out over two, then three centers of consciousness.

More than two pages are devoted to a detailed description of a lucid dream. The author explains the purpose of the article as being to "analyse [sic] the growth of a dream, out of the simply natural into the grotesque."[57] The appearance of certain literary conventions suggests that the story is a work of fiction. At the same time, the writer conveys a depth and subtlety of psychological observation that suggest the dream is to some degree autobiographical. While it is difficult to determine where psychological analysis ends and fictionalization begins, the content of the dream is illuminating in the way that it reflects oddly Victorian contours of the mind.

At least at times, the dreamer professes to be "distinctly conscious that I'm dreaming."[58] While split into two personalities, one part of the dreamer believes the dream is real. The other part is aware of dreaming and adopts a "deriding" attitude toward the nonlucid self.

Intriguingly, it turns out that the lucid, or "deriding," personality has less awareness than the nonlucid self in one important aspect. The lucid self believes the "dreadful dwarf" that appears in the dream is real, whereas the nonlucid self is aware the dwarf is a fabrication of the dreamer's mind. Although the dreamer identifies both personalities as his self, he seems to identify more closely with the lucid dream character. For example, the lucid self does not know why the dwarf-giant is chasing him, but the nonconscious self does know and will not tell him. The nonlucid self seems to be some unidentifiable mix of the dreamer and an external dream character.

In seeking protection from the dwarf-giant, the lucid self goes to sleep in the dream. While asleep, the lucid self fears being shot, then reasons that being shot in a dream would not result in death, whereas being shot while awake would end in him being killed. Based on this reasoning the lucid self continues to dream. The dreamer eventually is killed by the dwarf, then floats into the sky and becomes a star. The dreamer at this point is aware that he has

three selves—namely, the star, the murdered self, and the person who was sleeping.

In this fascinating Victorian dream, the boundaries of both lucid awareness and the self are significantly more permeable and nuanced than the common patterns manifested in modern lucid dreaming descriptions. In this regard, the story hints at providing an intriguing glimpse of a forgotten region of the lucid dreamscape, a region that highlights little-known differences between contemporary and Victorian models of the dreaming mind.

Spiritualism

In 1848, two young sisters in Hydesville, New York, appeared to communicate with a spirit that made noises, which were interpreted through a simple code. News of the sisters, aged 12 and 15, spread rapidly, and others began claiming to have similar powers. Over the next several years the spiritualist movement was born, spreading through the United States as well as Europe. Those who professed having some kind of contact with these spirits were called mediums. These mediums demonstrated a variety of capacities, from automatic writing and trance speaking to physical manifestations such as the movement of objects.

Mediums displaying mental phenomena were of interest to late 19th-century psychologists who used them as instruments for investigating the mind. In particular, research on hypnotic and mediumistic automatic writing played a critical role in the rise of late 19th-century depth psychology. Spiritualism was also one of the primary catalysts of the late Victorian interest in lucid dreaming.

Elizabeth Oaks Prince Smith

The first wave of the initial popularity of spiritualism produced some interesting lucid dreaming narratives. Among these writers, Elizabeth Oaks Prince Smith deserves special mention for her originality, thoughtfulness, and literary skills. Remembered primarily as a feminist and literary figure, Smith wrote *Shadow Land; or, the Seer* in 1851.

In this book Smith surveys a wide variety of dream topics related to mysticism, spirits, prophecy, and the imagination. One topic that she covers is what she calls double dreaming:

> I have had many of these; the latest is that of being in a high marble room, with windows in deep embrasures—lofty in height, and abundant in tracery. The furniture I did not notice, except at one side there is a luxurious mat, a sofa, table, books and bouquets. There is an air of gloomy grandeur in the room—I am alone—but always there is an open portal into which the sunlight streams with a warm cheerful glow. Now I have seen nothing in life like this room, which I should recognize at once, if I ever had. All is foreign to me, and in my sleep, I say often, "Oh I am in Italy again." I have so often seen this in my visions that I frequently tell in my sleep of this dream, and then I dream that I am dreaming it. (The reader must pardon this tautology inseparable to a subject whose vocabulary is limited).[59]

Smith then mentions an intriguing modification of her double dream, where "the operation became triplicate with singular clearness."[60] She became aware that she was in her recurring dream, then, "as if struck with the singularity of the thing, I reached still another consciousness which can hardly be seized in the waking state."[61] She describes this consciousness as having

> an indistinct impression of vastness, magnificence, beauty, and infinitude. . . . There is a depth and breadth in the internal consciousness which we hardly reach in waking, and which fills us with sublime emotions whether the result be tangible or not.[62]

Francis Gerry Fairfield

The spiritualist movement first descended on the town of Stafford, Connecticut, during the winter of 1856–1857. One young local medium named Mr. Home would eventually gain international fame as one of the most well-known spiritualists of his generation. A 16-year-old boy named Francis Gerry Fairfield was present at many of Mr. Home's séances. These séances left a deep impression on the young Francis, who grew up to become, among other things, a journalist and one of the earliest researchers of psychic phenomena. Throughout the late 1860s and early 1870s, Fairfield conducted investigations and collected data for a book he was writing on mediums. This research brought him into extensive contact with the unusual mental world of mediumistic trance states, which he grew to regard as morbidly related to epilepsy, but also as representing compelling evidence of psychic activity.

In 1870, in the midst of his psychical research, Fairfield wrote a forgotten article about lucid dreaming entitled "Will the Man of the Future Be Able to Control His Dreams?"[63] This article was published in 1870, 43 years before van Eeden's milestone paper "A Study of Dreams."[64] Fairfield's presentation

of lucid dreaming is overtly scientific and conspicuously absent of references to his background as a psychical researcher. He writes of lucid dreaming as the natural outgrowth of scientific progress extending into more and more realms, including subjective human consciousness. For Fairfield, it is therefore a matter of course that scientific progress will include in its path the eventual control of one's dreams.

> As the evolution of the coming man approaches nearer and nearer to the historical climax by that individual represented, physical slumber is gradually differentiated from mental—the coming man sleeping not in the sense in which the man of the period sleeps, but translating himself at will from the mode of wakefulness to the Elysian twilight of consciously enjoyed drowse.[65]

Fairfield identified two important values of controlling one's dreams. The first value is utilitarian. He argues that dream control would allow one to extend the amount of time the typical person spends living, "in the fullest sense of the verb." He estimates that "on the average, the normal man lives only ten years. The rest of one's life is not fully lived due to sleeping, immaturity, senility, and other factors."[66]

The second value of becoming conscious while dreaming is its potential for aesthetic recreation. Fairfield describes this potential in glowing terms.

> Conscious dreaming opens into dim vistas of the esthetic, the gates of which have been long shut to humanity; the condition of slumber being transmitted into an Elysium controllable at will—a delicious imparadisation to be taken consciously, to be consciously modulated, to be understood consciously as belonging to oneself and thus to be enjoyed as one of the luxuries of living. The coming man may, therefore, create his own dream-world . . . and sleep may be made to assume to him the complexion of a delicious and ecstatic esthetic revery [sic] subject to conscious control—a Utopia of the beautiful to which the man retreats while the process of physical repair is going on.[67]

Late Victorian and Early 20th-Century Lucid Dreaming Perspectives

The late Victorian era and the decade that followed it includes what Gauld identified as the "golden age" of the subconscious.[68] This golden age included the time period between Janet's publication of *L'automatisme*

Psychologique in 1889 and Prince's publication of *The Unconscious* in 1914.[69]

Lucid dreaming experienced its own golden age during this era. The topic of being aware of dreaming appears in the literature of this time period to an unprecedented degree.[70] One indication of lucid dreaming's prevalence is apparent from the section on dreams in the 1910 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.[71] The first two sentences of this section include the acknowledgment that "we may, however, be conscious that we are dreaming." The *Encyclopaedia* later mentions Frederic Myers and Frederik van Eeden as being able to "at longer or shorter intervals control their actions in their dreams."[72] These excerpts from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* dispel common modern assumptions that conscious dreaming and more specifically van Eeden's lucid dreams were unknown to the general public before van Eeden published "A Study of Dreams" in 1913.

Lucid dreaming was also discussed in the field of mainstream experimental psychology. In 1905, in the *American Journal of Psychology*, James Ralph Jewell reported on his survey of more than 2,000 dreams from over 800 people.[73] Jewell believed that this investigation was the largest survey ever conducted on dreams up to that time. He discusses several reports of dreamers becoming aware of dreaming, and reports, "These results clearly prove, too, that one may know during a dream, that he is dreaming, as Beaunis has asserted. This has been thought to be impossible, on the ground that during sleep judgment is in abeyance."[74]

This increase in lucid dreaming discussions in the late 19th century coincided with mounting evidence of the mind's capacity to maintain a continuity of memory, volition, reason, and awareness within and across distinct mental states. Such evidence has been meticulously chronicled by Gauld.[75] The growing appreciation of the mind's plurality and plasticity in the golden age of the unconscious held an affinity with the fluid boundaries of consciousness implied in lucid dreaming. This next section will confine itself to the topics of occultism, hypnosis, and psychical research in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Occultism

Emma Harding Britten was born in London's East End in 1835. At the age of

11, her heart was broken by the death of her father, a sea captain. Soon after this tragedy, she "resolved to follow him" and walked to the edge of a riverbank. She turned away from diving off the bank when she vividly felt the hand of her father and heard his voice admonishing her to return to school and continue supporting her family as a precocious music teacher.

This young girl soon found a rather unexpected way of honoring her resolution to follow her father into unseen worlds. Britten somehow attracted the attention of a clandestine occult group whose members became convinced she had clairvoyant powers. She referred to this group as the Orphic Circle, although she refused to reveal its true name. Britten was one of several mediumistic children the group employed. Group members would vicariously participate in the children's travels through occult realms. With some relevance to the history of lucid dreams, the order would send Britten on astral journeys through both the visible and the nonmaterial worlds, applying a mixture of ceremonial and mesmeric rituals, along with drugs. This group had historical roots in Lyons, France, where mesmeric esotericism first took root in the 1780s and eventually traveled through aristocratic circles to England.

A theatrical career, first as an opera singer, then as an actress, eventually led Britten in her early thirties to move to New York. In this new country, she soon revived her mediumistic roots and joined the spiritualist movement. She became an extremely popular speaker, delivering all of her speeches while in a trance. Over the next several decades Britten would become one of the most influential spiritualist theorists and historians. She was one of several notable figures from the second half of the 19th century who sought to either reform or replace spiritualism with older Western esoteric traditions that were experiencing a revival, particularly in France.

Eliphas Levi, one of the most popular and influential 19th-century French occultists, borrowed heavily from Mesmer. Beginning in the mid-1850s, Levi's esoteric publications mark the beginning of occultism, which refashioned the occult as an experimental science. The late 19th-century and early 20th-century occult literature that is so closely associated with the history of lucid dreaming belongs to Levi's tradition of occultism. His "astral light" is derived from Mesmer's invisible fluid and serves as the foundation of the phenomenon of *astral projection*, a popular phrase still used today in association with lucid dreaming.

Along with Britten, one of the most influential occultists of the late 19th century was Madame Blavatsky, cofounder and primary theorist of the Theosophical Society. She published her first major work, *Isis Unveiled*, in 1877.[76] In presenting her version of theosophical philosophy, Blavatsky draws upon a considerable number of Christian, Western esoteric, scientific, Hindu, Chinese, Buddhist, mesmeric, and other sources. Levi's astral light plays a prominent role in her philosophy. She equates the astral light with Paraclesus's sidereal light, the scientific term "ether," the Hindu concept of *akasa*, the Brahman word *sadasva*, and the magnetic fluid of mesmerism.

For Blavatsky, the astral light is the "invisible divine spirit" that permeates and encompasses the entire cosmos.[77] The source of life is the astral light, which penetrates the world through the stars. She considered this astral light to be "the realization of the potency of every quality of spirit."[78] In sleep, the physical body enters a state of rest and the body's senses are closed. This frees the astral body to embark on voyages through the physical as well as the occult realms. Dreams represent one way in which the astral body leaves an impression on the physical brain during its travels. Through mastering the art of ritual magic, the adept is able to project the astral body in such a way that conscious and willed astral journeys occur. Blavatsky was the first of many figures identified with the Theosophical Society to write about the esoteric significance of becoming aware of dreaming.

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was the most prominent late 19th-century training ground for learning advanced ritual magic.[79] Through these astral voyages, magicians acquired knowledge of occult planes of existence, explored aspects of their past lives, and enlisted the support of spiritual guardians. Advanced magicians could sustain astral journeys that lasted for two hours. Many of these journeys occurred in physiological sleep. According to Florence Farr, a prominent actress and Golden Dawn leader, "the dream of the sage is a consciously guided dream."[80]

Hippolyte Bernheim and the Nancy School of Hypnosis

Hippolyte Bernheim's book *Suggestive Therapeutics* was the catalyst for the emergence of the Nancy School of hypnosis.[81] The Nancy School argued that hypnosis is not just a morbid characteristic of hysteria; rather, normal persons are susceptible to hypnotic suggestion to varying degrees.[82] Bernheim

asserted that hypnotic hallucinations were a type of dream. Unlike the majority of the early 19th-century mesmeric literature, Bernheim and other Nancy School hypnotists believed that the boundaries between hypnotic dreaming and the waking state were permeable.

In the case studies presented in *Suggestive Therapeutics*, patients sometimes demonstrate this permeability. For example, one of Bernheim's subjects is a former soldier whom Bernheim induces through hypnosis to relive his earlier wartime battles. The soldier has an awareness of being both on the battlefield and in the hospital with Bernheim, a fact that puzzles the hypnotic subject. Bernheim refers to this dual awareness as a "division of personality" and claims that it also occurs in physiological sleep.[83] The nocturnal dreamer interacts with scenes from the past, yet simultaneously maintains a sense of the present. According to Bernheim, "Sometimes this feeling [of the present] is so distinct, that we say to ourselves, 'It is only a dream.' "[84]

Through his intimate connection with the Nancy School over a period of many years, Frederik van Eeden was exposed to a therapeutic method whose foundational text mentions the idea of lucid dreaming. Furthermore, this text advocates working directly with induced hypnotic "dreams" of patients and encouraging patients to become aware of being in this type of dream. This portion of van Eeden's background provided him with significant exposure to the psychotherapeutic potential of dream lucidity.

Frederic Myers and the British Society of Psychical Research

Frederic Myers was the leading theorist of the British Society of Psychical Research and a key player in the explosion of late 19th-century interest in the unconscious. In fact, a strong argument can be made that Myers was the most prominent English-language figure associated with Gauld's golden age of the subconscious. Myers developed a highly influential model of the mind called the Subliminal Self.

Myers was keenly interested in the theoretical significance of lucid dreaming. He regarded the phenomenon of becoming aware of dreaming as "precious occasions of experimentation," and was inspired to exert "painstaking effort" over a period of 3,000 nights toward becoming aware of dreaming, albeit succeeding only three times.[85] He asserted, "we are still

groping among the rudiments of a true knowledge of our psychical being."[86] In his view, lucid dreaming was one of several modes of experimentation that could lead to "conclusions [about the nature of the human mind] of even startling magnitude."[87]

Myers developed an evolutionary theory of dreaming and the subconscious, which he frequently illustrated through an analogy of the electromagnetic spectrum. He compared waking consciousness to the portion of the electromagnetic spectrum visible to the human eye. Nonwaking forms of consciousness may emanate from lesser evolved regions of the infrared spectrum, but they may also be latent examples of the evolutionarily new faculties that evolve in response to new stress. In Myers's analogy, these highly evolved manifestations of consciousness would come from the ultraviolet end of the spectrum of consciousness. Myers hypothesizes that ultraviolet "flashes of inspiration . . . [are] likely to be more conspicuous when the glare of the supraliminal spectrum is deadened by sleep or trance."[88]

Myers stressed that dreams are of great psychological significance because one is likely to detect in them the operations of supernormal evolutionary mental faculties. He divides these supernormal faculties into the three categories of increasing one's control over the past, present, and future. In regard to the past, Myers believed that experiments involving exceptional powers of memory could lead to previously inaccessible glimpses into the inner working of the mind. Powers associated with the present involve heightening the capacities of the senses, an idea that van Eeden incorporated into his dream theory. Future powers relate to the kind of experiments that were being done in the area of hypnotic suggestion.[89]

Myers was also interested in the ways in which lucid dreaming could expand one's sense of the self. He asserted that one's identity is generally associated with one's thoughts. Through lucid dreaming, one could potentially expand one's sense of self to include dream consciousness, and possibly even the mysterious, hidden region of the mind from which both waking and dreaming consciousness arises.[90]

Frederik van Eeden

Like his friend and colleague Frederic Myers, the Dutch writer and

philosopher Frederik van Eeden was passionately interested in learning the skill of becoming aware that he was dreaming. A year after beginning a dream diary in 1896, he succeeded in "observing [a dream] with thorough consciousness."[91] He realized he was dreaming as he soared a few yards above the ground through an orchard in Italy. Van Eeden marveled at how vividly and realistically his perspective of the intricate foliage changed as he moved. He wondered how his mind was able to "create these extraordinarily compiled moving images," and concluded that what he was seeing was real.[92]

When he awakened, he was delighted by this first success in realizing he was dreaming:

> You cannot imagine my elation when, on awakening, I found that my attempt had met with success, that I had gone on observing—attentively observing, and thinking—thinking deeply and clearly, with full recollection and calm self-consciousness in that mysterious, senseless sphere of wonder and deception.[93]

Van Eeden felt as though he had broken through to an entirely new realm of existence. Encouraged by his first success, he strove to manifest longer lucid dreams and to improve his powers of observation and capacity for voluntary action while dreaming. His progress was slow, however, and he never succeeded in dreaming lucidly on a nightly basis. Nevertheless, van Eeden reported having 352 lucid dreams between 1897 and 1913, which amounts to, on average, one or two such dreams per month. He carefully recorded and pondered these dreams, which formed the basis of the dream theory he outlined in "A Study of Dreams." This paper, which was presented at the British Society for Psychical Research in 1913, is regarded as a historical milestone because van Eeden provides his first in-depth discussion of what he calls the *lucid dream*.[94]

Van Eeden's descriptions of lucid dreaming are sprinkled with rapturous exclamations: "Sleep possesses riches of sensations and a wealth of rapture that surpass the intensest joys of brilliant day, shedding behind them a radiance that penetrates the brightest daylight as sunshine penetrates an electrically lighted hall."[95] What is particularly intriguing is the impact these dreams had on his waking life. His lucid dreams became a singular source of strength, empowering him to bear the greatest turmoils and challenges of his waking life. Why did these dreams have such a profound impact on the waking van Eeden? An exploration of this question may illuminate van

Eeden's understanding of the psychotherapeutic potential of lucid dreaming. A selective survey of the broader scope of his writings, along with his theory of dreaming, provide clues to this tantalizing question.

Van Eeden's Background

Before embarking on this brief survey of van Eeden's life and thought, I feel the need to reemphasize the challenges involved in recognizing the contemporary relevance of historical texts that discuss dreaming. References to dreaming published before many of the insights from Freud, Jung, modern sleep laboratory research, and cognitive science can seem outdated, sometimes to a glaring degree. This may be due to a misunderstanding of terms or a failure to fully understand the writer's unfamiliar theoretical framework. At other times, the texts contain what would be widely regarded by most contemporary readers as genuine shortcomings or errors from the past. For this reason, I encourage the reader to keep in mind that the errors revealed by hindsight are much easier to identify than the insights obscured by the passage of time.

Most discussions of van Eeden found in the lucid dreaming community rarely take into account the context of his life beyond lucid dreaming. Consequently, van Eeden's full historical significance is poorly understood and underappreciated. One obvious reason for this is his association with psychical research. The modern perception of van Eeden as primarily a psychical researcher obscures the fact that he was also an internationally renowned figure who had attained the highest levels of distinction as a social reformer, poet, novelist, literary critic, hypnotherapist, and philosopher of language. Significantly, van Eeden drew explicitly from this wide-ranging expertise when constructing and presenting his lucid dreaming theory.

A young van Eeden first gained public recognition as a prominent Dutch writer. At the age of 24, he published his first novel, *Kleine Johannes,* which he wrote while he was in medical school. The Dutch poet and literary critic Leonard Charles von Noppen claimed in the early 20th century that van Eeden's first novel was "the most popular book published in Holland during the last fifty years."[96] A few years later, van Eeden cofounded with Albert Willem van Renterghem a hypnotherapeutic clinic that Gauld referred to as "perhaps Europe's finest hypnotic clinic."[97] In the early 1890s, van Eeden was one of the most distinguished figures in the Nancy School of hypnosis,

which by then had risen to a position of great prominence. During this time, Bernheim's Nancy School was moving beyond hypnosis and toward applying therapeutic practices in the waking state. It is van Eeden and his partner van Renterghem who provided this emerging phenomenon with the enduring name *psychotherapy*. At the International Congress on Psychology in 1892, van Eeden presented the first in-depth discussion of the meaning and implication of this new term.[98]

In the 1890s, Van Eeden also began to make a notable appearance in the philosophy of language. In "Significs and the Origins of Analytical Philosophy," Pietarinen discusses some contributions that the Significs movement made to the philosophy of language, which are commonly misattributed to Wittgenstein and other founders of Analytic Philosophy. According to Pietarinen,

> Van Eeden wrote in 1893–1897 a treatise that to date has remained virtually unheard of but which was quite ahead of its time, *Redekunstige grondslag van erstand houding*. Possibly one of the earliest treatises in the field of philosophy of language in the Netherlands, we can observe Wittgenstein's *Logisch-Philosophicsche Abhandlung* of 1921 mirroring van Eeden's treatise in terms of style and format and, at places, content too.[99]

Van Eeden's status as a novelist, literary critic, psychotherapist, and philosopher of language should be kept in mind when exploring his theory of dreaming and lucid dreams. His ideas about dream theory are substantially informed by his considerable expertise in these diverse domains. The implications concerning how his writings on dreaming should be examined are, therefore, arguably as noteworthy as any particular insights that may be found in "A Study of Dreams" and *Bride of Dreams*. There is little in the English-language lucid dreaming literature that indicates his writings on dreaming have been explored from the perspective of a proficient understanding of his diverse and noteworthy background.[100]

Most likely due to van Eeden's historical marginalization, "A Study of Dreams" has not been systematically examined in the scholarly and popular literature. *Bride of Dreams*, his novel about lucid dreaming, is considerably more obscure. The following overview of van Eeden's lucid dreaming theory is distinctive in the degree to which it is informed by van Eeden's *Bride of Dreams*.

Van Eeden's Lucid Dreams

Speaking metaphorically, van Eeden conceptualized lucid dreaming as a "sphere of ecstasy and great joy":

> In this [sphere] our consciousness of self is strongest, and it is impossible to give an idea of the wonderful clearness with which one views and admires everything, and the undoubted sense of a reality, though wholly unlike the reality of our waking hours. One sees vast, splendid, more or less clearly lighted landscapes, fashioned indeed according to earthy pattern, with mountains, trees, seas and rivers, but more beautiful and filling us with overwhelming admiration. And one sees them perfectly distinctly, with sharp intensity and full consciousness.[101]

In these lucid dreams, van Eeden experienced his body as having heightened faculties of perception. This was true of all five of his senses, and also extended to the domain of being able to "discern more subtleties of mood" with exquisite acuteness. These sublime powers of sensory perception led van Eeden to conclude that the lucid dream body represented an altogether new sense.

Clues to the profound effect of his dreams on his waking life can be found in one bold claim van Eeden made in *Bride of Dreams*: "The solution of the secret of our lives lies in our dreams."[102] Van Eeden elaborates that "the impulse toward beauty, toward sublimity, toward purest blessedness" is what most deeply compels us to search for life's ultimate secret. This impulse unites, leads, and guards all other impulses. In dreams, it is possible to "perceive more distinctly than in the day life signs of the highest beauty and purest blessedness."[103]

Van Eeden's theory of human fulfillment makes it possible to understand why his lucid dreams of "ecstasy and joy" were more than simply moments of intense pleasure. These dreams were intensely psychotherapeutic. They galvanized what he believed was his deepest impulse, that which oriented all other impulses. His lucid dreams had the potential to facilitate profound encounters with beauty, blessedness, and sublimity, bringing him closer to what he believed was the solution to life's ultimate secret.

From this perspective, it is possible to understand why van Eeden's lucid dreams, which appeared on average less than twice monthly, could have such a profound effect on his waking life, helping him "bear a hard life with fortitude."[104] The world's first self-identified psychotherapist had found in his lucid dreams of beauty, joy, and sublimity his deepest source of

psychological strength and vitality. Unfortunately, due to the near-complete neglect of the *Bride of Dreams* over the past century by dream writers, scholars, and researchers, van Eeden's proposed solution to life's ultimate secret has itself remained a secret.

Conclusion

I conclude with the suggestion that this mostly unknown history of lucid dreaming not be judged too prematurely as nothing more than an intriguing and quaint prelude to the modern understanding of lucid dreams. The eminent historian of psychology, Henri Ellenberger, observed, "Progress is sometimes merely the picking up of an old, abandoned idea."[105] Perhaps the "progress" of lucid dreaming's late 20th-century rediscovery will one day be further extended as a result of a more thorough examination of the history of lucid dreaming.

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6

Wings over Numenor

Lucid Dreaming in the Writings of J. R. R. Tolkien

Curtiss Hoffman

> "It reminds me of Numenor," said Faramir, and wondered to hear himself speak. " . . . of the land of Westernesse that foundered, and of the great dark wave climbing over the green lands and above the hills, and coming on, darkness unescapable. I often dream of it."[1]

Dreams play a significant role in The *Lord of the Rings*, a multipart fantasy story written in the 1930s and 1940s by J. R. R. Tolkien, a University of Oxford professor of philology. In both novel and movie form, the *Lord of the Rings* has become one of the most popular stories of all time. That popularity makes it all the more surprising that so little attention has been given to its fascinating portrayal of dreams.

Many aficionados of the writings of Tolkien are aware that Faramir's recurrent dream was Tolkien's own repeated experience—he spoke in his letters of having an "Atlantis Complex"—and that, after giving it to the character of Faramir, his own dreaming of this catastrophe ceased for a time[2] —although I am informed that the dream was subsequently inherited by his youngest son, Christopher, the editor of Tolkien's posthumous unpublished works.

Besides Faramir's premonitory dream, perhaps the most striking example is Frodo's dream in the house of Tom Bombadil,[3] which is intended as a precognition of his future admission into the land of Valinor:

> Either in his dreams or out of them, he could not tell which, Frodo heard a sweet singing running in his mind: a song that seemed to come like a pale light behind a grey rain-curtain, and growing stronger to turn the veil all to glass and silver, until at last it was rolled back, and a far green country opened before him under a swift sunrise.

The night previous, Tolkien gives us the dreams of three of the hobbits.[4]

> In the dead night, Frodo lay in a dream without light. Then he saw the young moon rising; under its thin light there loomed before him a black wall of rock, pierced by a dark arch like a great gate. It seemed to Frodo that he was lifted up, and passing over he saw that the rock wall was a circle of hills, and that within it was a plain, and in the midst of the plain stood a pinnacle of stone, like a vast tower but not made by hands. On its top stood the figure of a man. The moon as it rose seemed to hang for a moment above his head and glistened in his white hair as the wind stirred it. Up from the dark plain below came the crying of fell voices, and the howling of many wolves. Suddenly a shadow, like the shape of great wings, passed across the moon. The figure lifted his arms and a light flashed from the staff that he wielded. A mighty eagle swept down and bore him away. The voices wailed and the wolves yammered. There was a noise like that of a strong wind blowing, and on it was borne the sound of hoofs, galloping, galloping, galloping from the East. "Black Riders" thought Frodo as he wakened, with the sound of hoofs still echoing in his mind.

Frodo's two loyal companions Pippin and Merry, asleep nearby, also have unsettling dreams about the terrible dangers besieging them on all sides:

> At his side Pippin lay dreaming pleasantly, but a change came over his dreams and he turned and groaned. Suddenly he woke, or thought he had waked, and yet still heard in the darkness the sound that had disturbed his dream: tip-tap, squeak: the noise was like branches fretting in the wind, twig-fingers scraping wall and window: creak, creak, creak. He wondered if there were willow-trees close to the house, and then suddenly he had a dreadful feeling that he was not in an ordinary house at all, but inside the willow and listening to that horrible dry creaking voice laughing at him again.

Merry's dream is so upsetting it breaks through sleep into the waking state:

> It was the sound of water that Merry heard falling into his quiet sleep: water streaming down gently, and then spreading, spreading irresistibly all round the house into a dark shoreless pool. It gurgled under the walls, and was rising slowly but surely. "I shall be drowned" he thought. "It will find its way in, and then I shall drown." He felt that he was lying in a soft slimy bog, and springing up he set his foot on the corner of a cold hard flagstone. Then he remembered where he was and lay down again.

While all of these dreams incorporate some of the fears of the hobbits, and all of them border on lucidity, only Frodo's dream is visionary: what he is seeing is Gandalf's escape from captivity in Orthanc—which according to the chronicle of events had actually happened nine days earlier.[5]

Somehow it seems as if proximity to Tom Bombadil generates lucid dreams. There is a dreamlike quality to the entire sequence of events from the hobbits' "short cut" into the Old Forest until they rejoin the Great Road outside of Bree. We are never quite sure who Tom Bombadil is, and Tolkien himself was deliberately ambiguous about him. Elrond, on the one hand,

states that he is "oldest and fatherless";[6] "his songs are stronger songs,"[7] which might make him equivalent to the Creator, Iluvatar, the director of the Song of the Ainur.[8] On the other hand, Tolkien wrote to a reader that Tom is merely an earth spirit and "not an important person,"[9] and that "even in a mythical Age there must be some enigmas, as there always are. Tom Bombadil is one (intentionally)."[10]

As Frodo's journey continues and the burden of the One Ring weighs more and more heavily on his mind, his dreams become darker: "Frodo lay half in a dream, imagining that endless dark wings were sweeping by above him, and that on the wings rode pursuers that sought him in all the hollows of the hills."[11]

At this point in the narrative, the Nazgul have appeared solely as riders on black horses, not yet having taken to the air on their winged beasts, which we see only much later in the story. Once again, this is a precognitive dream. Verlyn Flieger, in her essay "The Unhealed Wounds of Frodo Baggins," suggests that Frodo's whole experience of the Ring exposes him to a dreamlike world of shadows, into which he begins to "fade," especially after he is wounded with the Morgul-knife.[12]

In *The Two Towers*, Faramir recounts to Frodo and Sam a kind of dream in which he saw his brother's body, with the prefatory explanation, "Night oft brings news to near kindred"[13]:

> I sat at night by the waters of Anduin, in the grey dark under the young pale moon, watching the ever-moving stream; and the sad reeds were rustling. . . . that night all the world slept at the midnight hour. Then I saw, or it seemed that I saw, a boat floating on the water, glimmering grey, a small boat of a strange fashion with a high prow, and there was none to row or steer it. An awe fell upon me, for a pale light was around it. But I rose and went to the bank, and began to walk out into the stream, for I was drawn towards it. Then the boat turned toward me, and stayed its pace, and floated slowly by within my hand's reach, yet I durst not handle it. It waded deep, as if it were heavily burdened, and it seemed to me as it passed under my gaze that it was almost filled with clear water, from which came the light, and lapped in the water a warrior lay asleep. A broken sword was on his knee. I saw many wounds on him. It was Boromir, my brother, dead. I knew his gear, his sword, his beloved face. One thing only I missed: his horn. One thing only I knew not: a fair belt, as it were of linked golden leaves, about his waist. *Boromir!* I cried. *Where is thy horn? Whither goest thou? O Boromir!* But he was gone. The boat turned into the stream and passed glimmering on into the night. Dreamlike it was, and yet no dream, for there was no waking.

This sounds very much like the account of a lucid dream. Faramir, even more than Frodo, is a powerfully gifted dreamer. At the Council of Elrond,

Boromir relates a dream that "came to my brother in a troubled sleep; and afterwards a like dream came oft to him again, and once to me." He then proceeds to describe his own experience of the dream:

> . . . I thought the eastern sky drew dark and there was a growing thunder; but in the West a pale light lingered, and out of it I heard a voice, remote but clear, crying:
>
> *Seek for the Sword that was broken;*
> *In Imladris it dwells;*
> *There shall be counsels taken*
> *Stronger than Morgul-spells.*
> *There shall be shown a token*
> *That Doom is near at hand,*
> *For Isildur's Bane shall waken,*
> *And the Halfling forth shall stand*. (Tolkien 1966a:276)

In Tolkien's cosmos, the east represents the realm of danger and darkness, while the west is associated with the home of the gods, the Valar, from whence both light and inspiration come.

As is often the case in magical realism and fantasy, all of these dreams are "true" in that—like the Mirror of Galadriel—they accurately represent past, present, or future events. Tolkien had a very strong reason within his *legendarium* for making this so, for one of its most influential characters, Gandalf, is eventually revealed as an angelic spirit (Maia) who is affiliated with the Vala Irmo (Lorien), "the master of visions and dreams."[14] Along with the other wizards (Istari), he has been sent from the West by the Valar to aid the Children of Iluvatar in their struggle with the dark powers.[15] Gandalf's specific function, under the name of Olorin, is further described in the Valaquenta:

> Though he loved the Elves, he walked among them unseen, or in form as one of them, and they did not know whence came the fair visions or the promptings of wisdom that he put into their hearts. In later days he was the friend of all the Children of Iluvatar, and took pity on their sorrows; and those who listened to him awoke from despair and put away the imaginations of darkness.[16]

In the essay on the Istari cited previously, Tolkien provided an "etymology" of the name Olorin:

> *Olor* is a word often translated "dream," but that does not refer to (most) human "dreams," certainly not the dreams of sleep. To the Eldar it included the vivid contents of their *memory*,

> and of their *imagination*; it referred in fact to *clear vision*, in the mind, of things not physically present at the body's situation. But not only to an idea, but to a full clothing of this in particular form and detail.[17]

In short, this appears to describe the special qualities associated with lucidity, as differentiated from "most human dreams." And with good reason: the entire set of adventures of the hobbits may be construed as a pair of "fully clothed" dream narratives, with the main characters (Bilbo and Frodo) undertaking journeys into their own unconscious, during which each becomes increasingly lucid. For these journeys, Gandalf obviously functions as psychopomp, but he also leaves the scene at critical points to allow the protagonists to fend for themselves—and to grow thereby. As Timothy O'Neill has observed in his study of the Jungian archetypes evoked by the persons of the trolls and Gollum in *The Hobbit*:

> Bilbo's world is a dream world, a Faerie world; and in the world of dreams, of the psyche, the aggressive animal may symbolize unrestrained libido . . . Imagine yourself groping blindly about the darkness of your own unconscious, uncertain of what direction to take. Directing your efforts is *you*, as you know yourself—the ego complex. But the ego is conscious, and is treading unfamiliar paths. You are only dimly aware now, after signals granted you in dream and vision, of the presence of another *you*—the forgotten, ignored, reflexively denied, buried far from the light of day. It is both you and not-you, no man and everyman, your constant companion on the foggy road . . . The ego has courageously (more or less) entered the forbidden recesses of the unconscious and collided unexpectedly with its dark mirror image. The collision is brief and incomplete—the two are now for the first time fully aware of each other's existence, and their fates are inseparably bound. The only possible end of this dream lies many years and many miles ahead, at the Cracks of Doom.[18]

The point of these journeys, for O'Neill, is expanded consciousness: Bilbo and Frodo must become lucid within the dream and actively participate in transforming it, and themselves, thereby. In Bilbo's case, this is a qualified success; he returns home stronger and wiser, and with a share of the treasure. For Frodo, however, the process of accepting his relationship with the shadowy figure of Gollum literally dismembers him; while it results in the destruction of the One Ring, it also wounds him so irreparably that he can no longer remain in Middle Earth. Like Sauron, a part of Frodo's personality has been incorporated into the Ring, and when it is destroyed that part of him goes with it. " 'It is gone forever,' he said, 'and now all is dark and empty.' "[19] We may compare this experience with one of Jung's from the *Red Book*, after he has succeeded in releasing the God from the egg:

> When I conquered the God, his force streamed into me. But when the God rested in the egg and awaited his beginning, my force went into him. And when he rose up radiantly, I lay on my face. He took my life with him. All my force was now in him. My soul swam like a fish in his sea of fire. But I lay in the frightful cool of the shadows of the earth and sank down deeper and deeper to the lowest darkness.[20]

Tolkien gives us one of Frodo's dreams from the time after his return to the Shire in the poem "The Sea Bell." As the following excerpt shows, it is a despairing dream in which the dreamer is rendered powerless:

> Houses were shuttered, wind round them muttered, roads were empty. I sat by a door, and where drizzling rain poured down a drain I cast away all that I bore: in my clutching hand some grains of sand, And a sea-shell silent and dead. Never will my ear that bell hear, never my feet that shore tread, never again, as in sad lane, in blind alley and in long street ragged I walk. To myself I talk; For still they speak not, men that meet.[21]

The only apparent solution to this emptiness is Frodo's departure from the Grey Havens, as predicted in his dream in the house of Tom Bombadil.

Tolkien was apparently well aware that a good deal of the inspiration for his own writing came from beyond his waking consciousness. In his essay "On Fairy Stories," he wrote that "in dreams strange powers of the mind may be unlocked."[22] Following is an excerpt from a lengthy letter he wrote to a reader in 1971[23]:

> A few years ago I was visited in Oxford by a man whose name I have forgotten (though I believe he was well-known). He had been much struck by the curious way in which many old pictures seemed to him to have been designed to illustrate *The Lord of the Rings* long before its time. He brought one or two reproductions. I think he wanted at first simply to discover whether my imagination had fed on pictures, as it clearly had been by certain kinds of literature and languages. When it became obvious that, unless I was a liar, I had never seen the pictures before and was not well acquainted with pictorial Art, he fell silent. I became aware that he was looking fixedly at me. Suddenly he said, "Of course you don't suppose, do you, that you wrote all that book yourself?"
>
> Pure Gandalf! I was too well acquainted with G. to expose myself rashly, or ask what he meant. I think I said, "No, I don't suppose so any longer." I have never since been able to suppose so. An alarming conclusion for an old philologist to draw concerning his own private amusement. But not one that should puff any one up who considers the imperfections of "chosen instruments," and indeed what sometimes seems their lamentable unfitness for the purpose.

The Lord of the Rings and *The Silmarillion* are both set in a mythical past, at an unspecified distance in time from our own day. This aspect was part of the nature of the challenge that Tolkien accepted from the members of his

literary society, the Inklings: his close friend C. S. Lewis would write a trilogy set in space, while Tolkien would write one set in time. This project resonated with Tolkien's philological and antiquarian interests from an early age, for nearly all of his work is set in a mythical past, either that of Middle Earth or of Medieval England (e.g., "Farmer Giles of Ham").

But there is one notable exception to this, a work that is not only *not* set in the past, but set in Tolkien's future—indeed, in a way, even in ours. This work is the "Notion Club Papers," an unfinished manuscript written in 1946, during the time Tolkien was working on *The Lord of the Rings*, and published in Volume IX of *The History of Middle Earth* by Christopher Tolkien in 1992. The work purports to be the minutes of the fortnightly meetings of an Oxford literary society, the Notion Club (obviously a gloss for the Inklings, although there is little one-for-one correspondence to its members), between 1980 and 1990. The manuscript's conceit is that the papers "were found after the Summer Examinations of 2012, on the top of one of a number of sacks of waste paper in the basement of the Examinations Schools at Oxford by the present editor," and it is represented to have been published in 2014.[24]

The accounts of the club meetings start tamely enough, with several of the members reading aloud selections from their current literary works, as was the practice among the Inklings. They debate the credibility of various modes of space travel in science fiction. This conversation soon leads to a discussion of dreams as a means of space and time travel. One of the chief characters, Michael Ramer, observes:

> A pretty good case had been made out for the view that in dreams a mind can, and sometimes does, move in Time: I mean, can observe a time other than that occupied by the sleeping body during the dream. . . . A dreamer is not confined to the events of Other Time occurring in his bedroom.[25]

He goes on to describe how he incorporates dream material into his writing:

> I've always been impressed by how often it seems independent of my will or planning mind (at the moment). Often there is no trace of composing a scene or building it up. It comes before the mind's eye, as we say, in a way that is very similar to opening closed eyes on a complete waking view. I find it difficult, usually quite impossible, to alter these pictures to suit myself, and that is my waking purpose. As a rule I find it better, and in the end more right, to alter the story I'm trying to tell to suit the pictures. . . . On such occasions you are really seeing double, or simultaneously. You tend to associate the two views, inner and outer, though the juxtaposition of them may be, usually is, their only connexion. . . . The mind can be in more

than one place at a given time; but it is more properly said to be where its attention is.[26]

Later, Ramer describes his experience of this as follows:

> I was awake in bed, and I fell wide asleep . . . I dived slap through several levels and a whirl of shapes and scenes into a connected and remembered sequence. . . . And the memory did not vanish when I woke up, and it hasn't vanished. . . . My dream memories are no longer fragments, no longer like pictures . . . they are wide and long and deep. I have visited many other sequences since then, and I can now remember a very great number of serious, free, dreams, my deep dreams, since I first had any.[27]

He further defines "deep" dreams as "dreams as remote as may be from disturbance, dreams in which the mind is seriously engaged."[28]

It seems as if, in these passages, Tolkien is describing his own experience with dreaming, and that these dreams at least are bordering on lucidity. The clearest indication of this is found in a footnote:

> I think that as the seeing in free dreams is not done with the eyes, it is not subject to optical laws. But light can be used, like any other mode of being. The mind can, as it were, travel back up-stream, as it can go back into this historical record of other things. But it seems tiring: it requires a great energy and desire. One can't do it often, nor can one go to an indefinite distance of Time and Space.[29]

Ramer goes on to give a number of examples of his own dreaming. He explains how these dreams fit into the context of larger stories, including their emotional content, which is not at all apparent to the other Notion Club members upon his telling them the clear fragments. He provides his own classification of dreams into four types:

> *Perceiving* (free dreams), *Composing and Working*, and *Reading*. . . . *Perceiving* can be, for instance, either inspections and visits to real scenes; or apparitions, in which one may be deliberately visited by another mind or spirit. Reading can be simply going over the records of any experiences . . . or it can be perceiving at second hand, using minds, inspecting *their* records.[30]

Here, Ramer intimates that these records can be fictions, "specially composed to be inspected by others and to deceive, to pass as record; but it is made for the malefit of Men" (Tolkien 1992:196). He does not specify the identity of the "deceiver," but the diabolical implication is clear, especially given Tolkien's devout adherence to Catholicism.

Ramer also describes a type of dream that appears to truly come from outside the dreamer's experience:

> a sort of knocking at the door . . . that is one of the ways in which that horrible sense of fear arises: a fear that doesn't seem to reside in the remembered dream-situation at all, or wildly exceeds it. . . . Sometimes the mind is suddenly aware that there is a Night outside, and enemies walk in it: one is trying to get in. But there are no walls. . . . The soul is dreadfully naked when it notices it, when that is pointed out to it by something alien. But there is a guardian. He seems to command precipitate retreat.[31]

This is very reminiscent of Ryan Hurd's description of nightmare episodes that occur during lucid dreaming.[32] Once again, Tolkien does not specify who the "guardian" might be, but the implication is that it is angelic in nature.

Following this more or less theoretical discourse, the Notion Club Papers enter an even stranger space. Another of the club members, Alwin Arundel Lowdham, begins having hypnagogic experiences of a dark being named Zigur, which turns out to be the Adunaic (Numenorian) name of Sauron, the Dark Lord from *The Lord of the Rings*.

> Suddenly Lowdham spoke in a changed voice, clear and ominous, words in an unknown tongue; and then turning fiercely upon us he cried aloud: "*Behold the Eagles of the Lords of the West! They are coming over Numenor!*" We were all startled. Several of us went to the window and stood behind Lowdham, looking out. A great cloud, coming up slowly out of the West, was eating up the stars. As it approached it opened two vast sable wings, spreading north and south.[33]

This cloud image ties in with the eagles, but also presages a major storm event during a following meeting on June 12, 1987. As Christopher Tolkien observes, "My father's 'prevision' was only out by four months. The greatest storm in living memory struck southern England, causing vast damage, on October 16, 1987" (Tolkien 1992:211).

In Tolkien's *legendarium*, eagles have a very special place. The published accounts of the downfall of Numenor do not mention eagles, but it is clear from the Notion Club papers that they are involved. They are the sole means by which the chief of the Valar (gods), Manwe, interacts with his creation. A trio of his eagles guarded entry to the holiest shrine on Numenor, the Meneltarma:

> If anyone approached the summit, at once three eagles would appear and alight upon three rocks

> near to the western edge, but at the times of the Three Prayers they did not descend, remaining in the sky and hovering above the people. They were called the Witnesses of Manwe, and they were believed to be sent by him from Aman to keep watch upon the Holy Mountain and upon all the land.[34]

Readers of the published novels will certainly recall how the eagles rescue characters from certain doom: first Bilbo and his companions when they are attacked by orcs[35]; then Gandalf twice, once from Isengard[36] and then from the peak of Celebdil[37]; and finally Frodo and Sam from Mordor.[38] They turn the tide at the Battle of Five Armies.[39] An eagle also appears to announce the downfall of Sauron to the people of Minas Tirith.[40] In the *Silmarillion*, they appear in a similar role. They rescue the brothers Huor and Hurin from battle and take them to the hidden city of Gondolin[41]; they carry off the body of Fingolfin after he has been slain by Morgoth[42]; and they defend the refugees of the fall of Gondolin from attack by Balrogs.[43] Their association with Manwe is further indicated by the description of the wizard Radagast, whose Elvish name, Aiwendil, means "friend of birds." Although he is said to be a Maia of Yavanna, the Earth-Goddess,[44] he is familiar with the speech of birds.[45] It is Radagast who provides the contact with the eagles who provide Gandalf's first rescue.

Ramer also says that he has had dreams of Numenor, "my name for Atlantis."[46] Soon after, Lowdham returns with a rather complete text retrieved from his dreams. Since several of the club members are, like Tolkien himself, philologists, they work out the languages and provide translations into Anglo-Saxon and modern English. The text turns out to be a lament for the downfallen island of Numenor. From this point on, the thread of the argument merges with Tolkien's own recurrent dream experience. It does not escape the attention of the club members that Lowdham's first two names translate to Elendil and Earendil in Elvish (Sindarin), "Elf-friend" and "Sea-friend"—the leader of the survivors from Numenor and the father of the first king of Numenor, respectively.

Unlike Ramer, Lowdham's dreams provide him with words rather than images:

> They come into my mind unbidden, or I wake to hear myself repeating them. Sometimes they seem to be quite isolated, just words or names. Sometimes something seems to "break my dream" as my mother used to say: the names seem to be connected strangely with things seen in waking life, suddenly, in some fleeting posture or passing light which transports me to some

quite different region or thought or imagination.[47]

Another club member, Wilfrid Trewyn Jeremy, also begins having hypnagogic experiences of this subject, in the form of verbal outbursts, relating closely to the June storm event and its ancient predecessor, the storm that accompanied the downfall of Numenor:

> Ah! Look! There is a chasm in the midst of the Great Seas and the waters rush down into it in great confusion. The ships of the Numenoreans are drowned in the abyss. They are lost forever. See now the eagles of the Lords overshadow Numenor. The mountain goes up to heaven in flame and vapour; the hills totter, slide, and crumble: the land founders. The glory has gone down into the deep waters. Dark ships, dark ships flying into darkness! The eagles pursue them. Wind drives them, waves like hills moving. All has passed away. Light has departed![48]

It is an open question as to by which mechanism, within Tolkien's thought, these dreams and waking visions of past cataclysms emerge in the consciousness of the Notion Club members. Verlyn Flieger, in an essay comparing Ramer's experience with the strange episode of the Barrow-Downs in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, suggests that Tolkien, despite his Catholicism, had a belief in reincarnation[49]—or, perhaps, he "did not at least disbelieve" in it. She relates this supposition to the recurring Amandil-Elendil sequence of father-son names in Tolkien's writing, of which Lowdham is the most recent incarnation. The Notion Club members actually discuss this topic at one of their meetings. While I agree that the feeling and tone of Merry Brandybuck's experience of the death of a prince of Cardolan while in the Barrow is similar to Ramer's, Lowdham's, and Jeremy's emotion-laden expressions, I suspect that Tolkien had spirit possession rather than reincarnation in mind when he wrote the scene in *Fellowship*. Merry attests that he "must have been dreaming," but it is certainly not a lucid dream, for he seems to confuse it for a moment with waking reality when he comes out of his altered state. Tolkien, indeed, did believe in one sort of reincarnation for Elves, in which they spend time after death in the halls of Mandos, but then may be released under certain circumstances to return to Middle Earth[50]—Glorfindel is the chief example of this[51]—and another for Dwarves, or at least for the Dwarven Longfathers, who reincarnate under the same name at intervals.[52] But the same privilege, if it be that, is never accorded to Men. What happens to them after death is a mystery, and a topic of considerable debate among both Elves and Men.[53]

Jeremy and Lowdham go off on an extended vacation together, in the course of which they deliberately experiment with mutual lucid dreaming about Numenor. In their absence, Ramer produces a few pages of manuscript he had taken from Lowdham, which were written by Edwin Lowdham, Alwin's father, in Elvish script, but in the Anglo-Saxon language. Ramer has had this manuscript translated by "Old Professor Rashbold," an expert in that tongue.[54] This individual is clearly Tolkien himself, for it is his imagined translation from German of his last name, "Toll-kuehn"! It is once again an account of the downfall of Numenor, and it is written in a very careful hand —clearly an item to which Tolkien gave much loving attention.

When Lowdham and Jeremy return, they tell the club of their adventures. Their accounts move back and forth in time, encompassing not only the end of the Second Age of Middle Earth, but also the closing days of the Anglo-Saxon rule of Britain and the time of the Lombards in Italy. Each of these times seems to include a pair of figures, an Elendil or Aelfwine or Alwin and his father, an Amandil or Eadwine or Edwin. The boundaries between these timescapes seem to become thin; the adventurers can pass from one to another with ease, but not without danger of becoming lost. Much of their adventure takes place in the town of Porlock, which is doubtless significant, and not only for its historical associations with the last of the Saxon kings. It was a "person from Porlock," after all, who interrupted Samuel Taylor Coleridge from his dream vision of Xanadu![55]

It is in the midst of this account that the Notion Club Papers break off. Tolkien provided only a few sketches of where the story would go from here, and it seems that he intended to include in it the account of Aelfwine Eriol, the mariner whose story is recounted in his earliest formulation of the *legendarium*, the *Book of Lost Tales*. This would presumably have included a revised version of his early story of how this English mariner found the Lost Road to Elvenhome, where he learned the stories of the First Age from the Elves.[56]

It is entirely unclear what purpose Tolkien had in producing the Notion Club Papers, but his publishers were pressuring him at the time to get back to the writing of *The Lord of the Rings*, for obvious economic reasons, and this may explain why he did not finish the work. He never returned to it, and its status remains mysterious to this day. However, it is the clearest indication we have in all his writing of his interest in a variety of dream states and their

relationship to waking physical reality. In particular, even though there is no evidence that he was aware of the writings of van Eeden on lucidity, it seems that Tolkien had a strong interest in lucid dreaming, based upon his own personal experience, and that he was attempting to put this into some kind of formulation in words that would make his experience more understandable, at least to his fellow Inklings. But he also clearly had another motive in his writing, despite his claim that:

> Of course the book was written to please myself (at different levels), and as an experiment in the arts of long narrative, and of inducing "Secondary Belief." It was written slowly and with great care for detail, & finally emerged as a Frameless Picture: a searchlight, as it were, on a brief episode in History, and on a small part of our Middle-Earth, surrounded by the glimmer of limitless extensions in time and space. Very well: that may explain to some extent why it "feels" like history. . . . But it does not fully explain what has actually happened. Looking back on the wholly unexpected things that have followed its publication . . . I feel as if an ever darkening sky *over our present world* had been suddenly pierced, the clouds rolled back, and an almost forgotten sunlight had poured down again. . . .[57]

To what degree did "our present world" "remind [Tolkien, or for that matter us] of Numenor"? O'Neill comments:

> The kingdom of Men has fallen on shabby times. As before, the heritage of the past, Man's link to the creators, has faded. The symptoms are clear: the preoccupation with conquest and riches that finished Numenor; the enervative materialism, the endless intramural wars and conspiracies that ultimately devastate Arnor, the corruptive power and gradual weakening of Gondor . . . In *The Spiritual Problem of Modern Man* and other commentaries, Jung discussed this matter of cultural one-sidedness at some length. He deplored the dwindling of conscious symbols for expression of unconscious promptings and despised the chaotic or fragmented nature of modern art when cut loose from the archetypal patterns of wholeness. The problem of one-sidedness is distilled in this idea: simple denial of the unconscious aspects of the psyche does not make them go away—it may indeed cause them to grow more powerful than ever, bringing us increasingly, if unwillingly, under their sway.[58]

This brings the problems of Middle Earth home to roost, does it not? To deal with them requires a willingness on our part to confront, and even befriend, the *Geist der Tiefe*[59] that lurks in the collective unconscious of us all. As Ryan Hurd recommends, cultivating lucid dreaming is one way to undertake this task in the present day.

I would like to close this chapter with an account of a semi-lucid dream of my own from April 5, 2012, which is set in the Middle Earth universe:

> *As Gandalf, I have an urgent message I need to get to the hobbits. It is about 20 years after the*

events in The Lord of the Rings. *I am in Gondor, and I set out on foot for the Shire. I travel rapidly northward through the uninhabited portions of Minhiriath, crossing two rivers, trying to stay out of sight of anyone. I come into a forest of very young trees, and here I lose track of where I am. Then I come to the foot of a small cliff, which I recognize. There is a narrow cave entrance here where I know that a minor wizard named Noh lives. I call him out of the cave. He is reluctant to emerge, and stays in the entryway. He is a diminutive fellow, dressed all in brown. He seems fearful of what might be in the outer world. I inform him that Sauron has fallen and his forces have been destroyed or dispersed, and that it's now safe to emerge. He is still reluctant. It turns out that there is a large company of minor wizards hiding in the cave, all of them of similar stature and dress to Noh. They blink at the light when they appear in the entrance. None of them wants to leave. I am disappointed at their cowardice, but I understand it.*

Noh informs me that the cliff is the southernmost end of the line of hills that culminates in Weathertop to the north, so I should easily be able to find my way from here. I thank him for the information, and continue on my way. I decide to climb to the summit of the range of hills to get a view of the landscape. There is an extensive cemetery here, with whitish stone grave markers and monuments, somewhat overgrown with green moss. I can read the inscriptions, and most of the names appear to be of the Men of Arnor who were killed during their wars long ago. However, some names don't seem to belong—I read one large raised inscription in block capital letters close to ground level which says "CAESAR." It is a rather sad place.

From here, I can look out westward over the countryside. It is a land of low, rolling hills, some of them with cultivated fields. And I can see the Great Road—there is actually a lorry driving along it. Progress? I descend to the Road, which I will follow into Bree. I only intend to spend a short time there before continuing on to the Shire, but when I get to the Prancing Pony, I find it's impossible to avoid having a conversation with Barliman Butterbur over a flagon of his best ale. He is doing very well for himself; he looks well-fed and has blond hair down to his shoulders.

I awaken from the preceding dream in my bedroom and proceed to tell it to my wife. I leave out some of the details or tell them out of order (for example, the crossing of Minhiriath), and I add some details that were not in the original dream (of Gandalf). For example, when Gandalf is on top of the hill in the cemetery, he sees two young men in green armor approaching on foot from the south. They turn out to be soldiers of Gondor, and they carry spears. They are also carrying messages. One of them continues northward on his mission, but the other one decides to travel with Gandalf to Bree.

En route, Gandalf decides to avoid a large loop of the Road, so they cut across country—into the Midgewater Marshes, or at least around the edges of them. The soldier is much plagued by the midges, but Gandalf seems to have some kind of magical ability to repel them, or at least he is not bothered by them. He clears away a small tree branch that was blocking their way. When they get to Bree, Barliman introduces them to his three wives, who are all very fat women lounging on sofas. The soldier takes a liking to one of them, and it looks like they are going to run away together. Barliman probably will

not miss her.

My wife comments that this is all very noncanonical; Gandalf would have left Middle Earth only a few years after the fall of Sauron with Frodo. I say, "I agree—but Gandalf can do what he wants."

As Gandalf is the Maia most closely associated with lucid dreaming, that is certainly true!

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7

Lucid Dreaming in Film and Cinema

Kelly Bulkeley
Bernard Welt

Introduction

It may pain academic researchers to hear it, but the truth is that far more people in contemporary culture learn about lucid dreaming from movies than from scientific studies and textbooks. In film and cinema, lucid dreaming is often portrayed in ways that excite people's interest and spur them to experiment with varying states of awareness within their own dreams. However, films often go far beyond current research in speculating about future possibilities, so an argument could be made that such movies do more harm than good by spreading misinformation and encouraging impossible fantasies. In this chapter we take the alternative position and argue that movies can convey authentic and useful information about lucid dreaming, even in stories that seem patently unrealistic and impossible. This does not mean the filmmakers have the intention of delivering a specific message or set of facts to their audiences. Rather, it means their cinematic works successfully convey aspects of lucid dreaming that are grounded in real human experiences and stimulate a vivid sense of philosophical wonder about the nature of life, consciousness, and reality.

The subject of films and lucid dreaming is a subset of the broader study of films and dreaming in general. This chapter touches on some of those bigger themes but concentrates for the most part on discussing seven films specifically focused on the experience of lucid dreaming: *Peter Ibbetson* (1935), *Dead of Night* (1945), *Dreamscape* (1984), *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984), *The Matrix* (1999), *Waking Life* (2001), and *Inception* (2010). The treatment of these films does not pursue their connections to other dream

films or to film history in general. Instead, this chapter concentrates on specific aspects of lucid dreaming, drawing on research discussed elsewhere in the book. The range of films is limited to English-language commercial productions in the fantasy and science fiction genres, all but one from American studios (the exception being *Dead of Night*, a British production). We leave out films from other genres, styles, and cultures, along with experimental or "art house" cinema. To do justice to works in those realms would require much more discussion and contextualization than we have space available. The films to be considered here are relatively accessible, and they could be used by teachers in almost any kind of class as an engaging means of introducing their students to major issues in lucid dream research.[1]

For each film, we provide some basic information about the cast, director(s), and genre. We focus on the role of lucid dreams in the plot of each film, examining how the characters (and viewers) are challenged in their ability to distinguish waking from dreaming, and ordinary dreaming from lucid dreaming. We also consider the cultural dynamics at play—how the film reflects the collective challenges and aspirations of that specific historical moment, and how it portrays lucid dreaming as an active response to its cultural time and place.

Before turning to the seven films, we want to set the scene, as it were, by mentioning some historical precursors to these stories and their primary themes and motifs.

Our Dreams, Our Realities

For many people, the experience of dreaming is most vividly characterized by a disorienting loss of volition and control. In dreams, people often find themselves thrown into strange situations and unexpected encounters. Sometimes they cannot speak or move, or they can do so only with great difficulty. Without warning, scenes can suddenly change, characters appear and disappear, and time abruptly shift forward or backward. Most people are familiar with a type of dream that might be called an "entropy nightmare"—a dream in which everything that *can* go wrong *does* go wrong. You're late, you're lost, you can't find your possessions, you're not prepared for what you have to do, everything keeps breaking or malfunctioning . . . Dreams like

these give people good reason for thinking that dreams happen *to* them, as passive recipients, as if their minds have been hijacked and they are just being dragged along for the ride.

Through the ages there have been philosophers and sages who have viewed dreaming differently, who have seen it as an arena for higher levels of creativity, agency, and awareness. The ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus pointed in this direction when he observed that, "when people dream, each has their own world. When they are awake, they have a common world."[2] In Heraclitus's view, there is a sharp distinction between the private subjectivity of the dream world and the public objectivity of the waking world. He implies that dreaming is separately generated within each of our minds, powerfully creative yet leaving us isolated in our own solipsistic fantasies.

Each of the films to be discussed in this chapter rejects Heraclitus's idea that people cannot share a dream world. As we shall see, these films explore the middle realm between the polar opposites of private dreaming and public reality.

In the Hindu mystical tradition of the *Upanishads*, there is a text that expresses the creative dimensions of this idea more clearly. The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* says that when a person dreams,

> He takes materials from the entire world and, taking them apart on his own and then on his own putting them back together, he dreams with his own radiance, with his own light. In that place this person becomes his own light. In that place there are no carriages, tandems, or roads; but he creates for himself carriages, tandems, and roads. In that place there are no joys, pleasures, or delights; but he creates for himself joys, pleasures, and delights. In that place there are no pools, ponds, or rivers; but he creates for himself pools, ponds, and rivers—for he is a creator.[3]

This ancient religious text provides a surprisingly modern psychological account of the formation of dreams. Just as Heraclitus noted, this *Upanishad* states that dreams do not portray actual objects, settings, or other aspects of the waking consensual world. Rather, dreams express the creative work of the mind itself, the "inner radiance" of the dreaming imagination.

Filmmaking originated more than a century ago in a process of projecting light and shadows onto a blank screen. It is quite literally an art of radiance. As the films to be discussed show, a deeper engagement with the light and shadows of dreaming can lead to a greater appreciation of the fundamentally human capacity to be a "creator."

In more recent times, Swiss psychologist Carl G. Jung described the nature of dreams in similar terms when he compared them to a "theater in which the dreamer is himself the scene, the player, the prompter, the producer, the author, the public and the critic."[4] Jung developed a "subjective" approach to the interpretation of dreams in which "all the figures in the dream [are conceived] as personified features of the dreamer's own personality."[5] A more elaborate form of this subjective approach to dream content was created by Frederick Perls, whose gestalt psychology approached every element of a dream as a projection of some aspect of the dreamer's psyche.[6] Several of the films discussed in this chapter make this Jungian-gestalt idea an explicit part of the plot, although it is not always clear who is the dreamer and who is being dreamed.

The dream as a personal creation of inner radiance, a theater of one's own mind, a realm of infinite potential—this general notion has a long cross-cultural history, and it provides a helpful context for the discussion to come. We suggest readers keep these philosophical ideas in mind as we review the films, each of which uses lucid dreaming as a vehicle to draw its audience into a vertiginous conceptual paradox: What kind of reality are we in right now? How can we ever know if this is the waking world or an elaborate dream? How can we ever be sure that the world we are experiencing at this moment is public consensual reality and not a fantastic creation of our own dreaming minds?

We now turn to the films. Note: These overviews reveal major plots twists, so spoiler alert!

Peter Ibbetson (1935)

This romantic fantasy was based on George duMaurier's novel of the same name, published in 1891. Directed by Henry Hathaway, it tells the life story of two star-crossed soul mates, played by Ann Harding and Gary Cooper. Cooper went on to become one of the most famous leading men of Hollywood's Golden Era of studio filmmaking, twice winning the Academy Award for Best Actor. The movie's publicity poster tagline was "Their love defied the world," and the film received an Academy Award nomination for Best Musical Score. The film's deeply sentimental tone would likely brand it

a “chick flick” in contemporary terms, comparable to other tales of supernatural romance like *Ghost* (1990) or *The Time Traveler’s Wife* (2009).

Set in the mid-19th century, the tale begins in the gorgeous country estates outside Paris. Gogo and Mimsie, two children living in neighboring mansions, have become the worst of rivals and the best of friends—in other words, they have fallen in love. Gogo is a strange and sensitive boy from the start. When his mother dies, he is crushed to learn he will be taken away from Paris, and from Mimsie, to live in London with his cold-hearted uncle, who renames him “Peter Ibbetson.” The story shifts forward about 20 years, when Peter has become a successful architect in London. He is sent to build a new horse stable at the country estate of the imperious Duke of Towers. Once there, he slowly realizes that the beautiful Duchess of Towers is none other than Mimsie, now known as Mary. As their profound love from childhood is rekindled, the furious Duke confronts them with a pistol. Peter defends himself, the Duke is killed, and Peter is sent to prison for murder. Now their dreams come to the fore, because Mary persuades Peter to trust the power of their love to enable them to meet in their dreams. He is scared and skeptical at first, but eventually he follows her guidance into this magical realm of shared lucid dreaming, and they spend their remaining years of life together as young lovers strolling through sunny meadows.

Contrary to Heraclitus, the dream world of Peter and Mary is one that can be shared between them. This is an important variation on lucid dreaming, as it extends the range of consciousness beyond the individual self to recognize the presence of other self-aware beings. It may be a startling discovery, but it can lead to magical realms of romantic wonder. An early turning point in *Peter Ibbetson* comes when Peter and Mary are standing outside the stables, and they start casually talking about a dream they simultaneously experienced the night before. Back and forth they go in describing the dream, filling in the details, commenting on each other’s behavior, and laughing together for several moments before they suddenly stop and realize how odd they must sound. It becomes clear to both of them that the depth of their intimacy goes beyond ordinary boundaries of self and other. Once Peter is imprisoned and chained to his miserable, filthy bed, he essentially gives up on life, but Mary comes up with a plan. She actively encourages Peter to become aware in his dreams, to look for her, and to control his emotions, suspend his skepticism, and trust that she has found a bridge to bring them together at last. The latter part of the film takes place mostly within their

dream world, and the special effects are actually quite limited. It is only when the dreaming becomes too grandiose and wish-fulfilling (e.g., when Peter imagines a fairy tale castle for them to live in) that it becomes unstable and things start to fall apart. Once Peter finds his balance, their shared world of dreaming becomes a luminous paradise of pastoral simplicity. This becomes *their* real world, and the real world for everyone else fades into irrelevance.

Peter Ibbetson came out in the midst of the Great Depression in the United States. By 1935, the year when the film was released, the unemployment rate had been higher than 20 percent for four straight years. It was obviously a bleak and despairing time, which may have inclined people to be more receptive to sentimental fantasies of transcendent love. Life isn't fair, and fate conspires to deny us our heart's desires—but we always have our dreams. As this film suggests, that may be enough.

Dead of Night (1945)

This British horror movie is a *portmanteau*, a broad narrative framework containing several distinct yet interrelated stories. Directed by Alberto Cavalcanti, Charles Crichton, Basil Dearden, and Robert Hamer, it includes writing credits for numerous people including H. G. Wells. The stories mostly follow the genre conventions of British tales of the uncanny and supernatural, with a mounting sense of dread culminating in a final horrible shock. Mervyn Johns plays the central character of Walter Craig, whose waking/dreaming confusion forms the outer frame of the movie.

The film begins with Walter, a professional architect, driving to "Pilgrim's Farm," a farmhouse in the English countryside, to assess a job. When he arrives, he meets a group of people, and suddenly he says to himself, "It isn't a dream this time." He goes on to tell everyone that he has dreamed this exact situation before, and he already knows each of them because they have met in his earlier dreams. The group responds to him with polite bemusement—everyone except Dr. van Straaten, a psychiatrist who explains Walter's apparent recurrent dream as forgotten memories of times he saw their pictures in the paper. From there, the film goes on to explore the uncanny depths of Walter's dream predicament—he feels sure something evil will happen soon, but he is not sure what. The other people at the farmhouse

are sympathetic to his plight, and each of them tells a story of their own encounter with strange, inexplicable phenomena. A man who is a professional race car driver tells of an apparition of death that saved him from boarding a bus that crashed in flames moments later, killing all aboard. A young woman describes entering an obscure room in a large house and seeing a child who, it turned out, had been murdered in that room many years before. An older woman shares a "weird happening" in which her fiancé became entranced by a mirror that had previously been owned by an insanely jealous man who killed his wife and himself in front of the mirror. An older man, perhaps to lighten the mood, recounts a ghost story of two golfing buddies, one of whom dies and mischievously haunts the other. The final story is told by Dr. van Straaten, who describes "a case that made me wonder": a ventriloquist whose mind was taken over by the personality of his dummy, Hugo, leading him to murder a rival ventriloquist.

After telling this tale, the psychiatrist presses Walter to face his fears and conquer them, so he can regain his sanity. Instead, Walter suddenly loses control of himself. He violently strangles Dr. van Straaten—and then Walter abruptly wakes up in his bed at home, to the harsh ringing of the telephone. He answers, and it is his boss sending him out to do the job at the farmhouse. His wife urges him to go, saying the drive will clear his mind and help with his recurrent nightmares. The film ends as it begins, with Walter arriving at Pilgrim's Farm.

The conclusion of the movie is poetically neat and aesthetically satisfying, yet monstrous in its implications. In contrast to *Peter Ibbetson*'s portrayal of lucid dreaming as a magical means of escaping a cruel reality, lucid dreaming in *Dead of Night* leads to nothing more than an awful awareness of one's doomed existential condition, trapped within an eternal cycle of confusion, madness, and violence. Dr. van Straaten serves as the voice of skeptical rationality and scientific authority, arguing that people should not believe there is anything about their anomalous experiences that cannot be explained by psychiatry. Yet even he eventually has to admit to having a weird, paradigm-shattering encounter with something quite bizarre and inexplicable. In this way, *Dead of Night* puts early 20th-century psychiatry on trial, challenging its reductionist explanations of dreams, visions, and other uncanny manifestations of the psyche.

Released just at the end of World War II, when the comforts of normal life were beginning to return to British society, the film suggests there are

many other dangers lurking beneath the surface of polite, civilized culture. Apparently the physicist Frederick Hoyle and some colleagues watched the movie and were inspired by its vision of an eternally recurring loop of existence to propose the "steady state" theory of the universe. According to this theory, the cosmos has no beginning and no end; it appears the same wherever one is, just as the circular plot of the movie has no beginning and no end.[7] The steady state theory was soon supplanted by the big bang theory, which postulates a specific moment at which the universe was formed. Even so, the unsettling philosophical vistas opened up by *Dead of Night* have continued to influence viewers through the years, with many later films referencing its eerie themes and images. The movie leaves its audience with the haunting sense that *everyone* has some kind of weird, paranormal experience in their lives. We rarely talk about these experiences, but they have a subtle influence on the way we look at things, shaping our sense of what is possible. What if, the film asks, we talked more about such uncanny phenomena? What might we learn by comparing each other's brushes with the bizarre? Would it help to clarify our understanding of life, or would it drive us mad?

Dreamscape (1984)

Dreamscape is a science fiction adventure movie with the tagline, "Enter a world beyond your wildest imagination where anything can happen." Directed by Joseph Ruben from a script by David Loughery and Chuck Russell, it stars Dennis Quaid as Alex Gardner, the scallywag hero of the dream world, with Kate Capshaw playing his love interest Jane DeVries and Max von Sydow portraying his wise mentor Dr. Paul Novotny. Although the film's special effects and wardrobe styles have not fared well over the course of time, *Dreamscape* offers a clever parable about the possible connections between personal dreams and collective nightmares.

The premise of the film is that lucid dreaming is a variant of extra-sensory perception (ESP), like predicting the future or reading other people's minds. Alex Gardner is gifted with such abilities, but he wastes them on gambling, girl-chasing, and other egocentric pursuits. His old mentor Dr. Novotny persuades him to participate in a government-funded study of

paranormal ESP powers, which involves a high-tech machine creating a link that allows a psychic like Alex to enter the dreaming reality of another person. As Alex learns how to use the machine, he flirts with Dr. Novotny's assistant Jane, tries to help a traumatized boy who suffers recurrent nightmares of a "snakeman," and spars with a rival psychic, Tommy Ray Glatman (David Patrick Kelly), who clearly has several screws loose. Then the president of the United States (Eddie Albert, looking very much like the actual U.S. president at that time, Ronald Reagan) is brought to the research facility complaining of terrible nightmares of nuclear apocalypse. One of the president's national security advisors fears these bad dreams will weaken the president's fortitude and prompt him to soften his position on nuclear disarmament. Thus the bloodthirsty psychic Glatman is sent into the president's dreams to assassinate him. Alex goes into the president's dreams to defend him (by this point he no longer needs the machine to enter other people's dreams), where he eventually defeats Glatman by using his own fears against him. Alex then goes into the dream of the national security advisor and kills him, too, before taking a long train ride with Jane in the movie's final scene.

On one level, *Dreamscape* is a typical tale of (hyper-masculine) wish fulfillment. Lucid dreaming is appealing insofar as it is a vehicle for adventure, power, and romance. The technology envisioned in the film is a stretch, but it reflects a natural curiosity about what the next steps will be with brain scanning devices and the neuroscience of sleep. The movie seems intended to answer the question, what would a Hollywood hero do with such a device? On another level, the film goes deeper, to reveal the darker potentials of lucid dreaming. Alex sexually assaults Jane in her dreams, and it takes him a while to recognize that what he did was wrong. His battles with Glatman are comparable to the shamanic dream battles described in Riboli's chapter in this collection, reminding us that lucid dreaming can be put to malevolent uses as well as beneficial ones. As noted, the film's special effects are badly dated now, although there are a few moments where the dream world becomes truly creepy and disorienting—for example, the president's nightmares of radiation-burned children pressing against him.

The political theme is not just happenstance. *Dreamscape* came out at an especially tense moment in the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, when both countries had thousands of nuclear missiles aimed at each other. As it turned out, the Soviet Union collapsed just a few years

later, but in 1984 it seemed a frighteningly real possibility that one side or the other could launch a cataclysmic attack that would destroy the whole world. President Reagan was responsible both for intensifying the conflict (e.g., by calling the Soviets an "evil empire") and for advocating a nuclear-free world that would eliminate the possibility of such weapons ever being used. In *Dreamscape* the president's nightmares accurately reflect the collective fears of that time. Alex is the main hero of the story, but the president also grows and learns from his dream experiences to become a better leader and steward of global peace. The film in this sense is a fable of lucid dreaming as a path to higher consciousness for all of humanity.

A Nightmare on Elm Street (1984)

Released just a few months after *Dreamscape*, this low-budget horror film was responding to similar cultural trends in early 1980s America, but from a much darker perspective. Written and directed by Wes Craven, it was the first of a hugely popular and commercially successful series of films set in a seemingly normal American neighborhood where the teenagers are locked in desperate, gory combat with a wise-cracking demon of the dream world named Freddy Kruger (Robert Englund). Craven apparently got the idea for the story after reading newspaper reports about Hmong immigrants living in Los Angeles, who believed themselves cursed and then died in their sleep.[8] The film stars Heather Langengkamp as Nancy Thompson, an ordinary Midwestern girl who becomes Freddy's greatest nemesis. Johnny Depp, in his first movie role, played Glen Lantz, Nancy's boyfriend. The tagline was, "If Nancy doesn't wake up screaming, she won't wake up at all." The surprisingly widespread and long-lasting popularity of *A Nightmare on Elm Street* suggests it somehow struck a deep chord in the lives and imaginations of its viewers.

In an idyllic American suburb with white picket fences and tree-lined streets, the story begins with a group of teenagers talking about the weird dreams they have all been experiencing recently. They realize they have been seeing the same figure in their dreams, a horribly burned man with long razor blades for fingers. One night, right after having sex, one of the teenage girls (Tina) is attacked in her dream by the man with the razors, and she is actually

killed in waking reality, right there in the bedroom. Her shocked boyfriend (Rod) is arrested for murder.

After this, Nancy begins having nightmares of the same terrifying man, and she realizes that Rod did not kill Tina, but the dream man did—Freddy Kruger. Unable to get the attention of her alcoholic mother or her father, who is also the town police lieutenant, Nancy decides to actively seek out Freddy in her dreams to see if she can make him stop. One by one, the other teens are murdered in their sleep by Freddy, who employs increasingly gruesome and flamboyant means to dispatch them. Johnny Depp's character Glen meets an especially unfortunate end. Nancy discovers that Freddy was a child murderer who had been burned alive by an angry mob—a mob made up of her own parents and the parents of the other teens Freddy was attacking. Nancy realizes that Freddy has come back from the grave to take his revenge. The adults refuse to believe her because they do not want to remember their deeds from that horrible past, so Nancy must confront Freddy on her own. The film seems to end with Nancy reaching a point of total fearlessness and declaring to Freddy, "You're nothing. You're shit." That apparently breaks the spell; Freddy disappears and Nancy wakes up. But suddenly Freddy's arm crashes through a window to seize her mother, and the movie closes with Nancy screaming.

Of the films considered so far, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* may be the most psychologically accurate in highlighting the greater propensity of young people to experience lucid dreams as compared to adults. In the world of this movie, the adults are deliberately obtuse about the dark secrets lurking in dreams. They have deceived and abandoned Nancy and her friends, who turn to lucid dreaming as a desperate way of regaining some degree of power in their lives so they can save themselves and the people they love (for Nancy, it is primarily her numb, lethargic mother). The film constantly startles and teases the audience with unexpected shifts of waking and dreaming. One never knows when Freddy might jump out from the shadows.

The "shamanic battle" theme mentioned earlier comes to the fore in this movie, too. Indeed, Nancy's experiences could be viewed as a shamanic initiation, a violent ordeal that strips her down to her core and prepares her to become a "dream warrior" (the title of the third film in the series), one who has powers within the dream world. The other teens perish because in their weaknesses they made themselves vulnerable to Freddy; they became scared, or lazy, or seduced, and that was enough to let him into their minds. Nancy

succeeds where they failed because she *believes* in the horrible reality of the dream world, yet learns how to master her fears of all that it contains. Before he meets his bloody end, Glen suggests that Nancy try the dream control techniques of the "Balinese" people, which end up sounding very similar to the Senoi methods of lucid dreaming discussed by Kilton Stewart and others (see this collection's Introduction). As G. William Domhoff suggested at the end of his critique of Stewart in *The Mystique of Dreams*, even though these methods may have nothing to do with the Senoi, the Balinese, or any other non-Western culture, *they may still work*—the methods may actually be effective in combatting recurrent nightmares.[9] In this movie, they end up saving Nancy's life.

The film does not offer a favorable view of growing up in Middle America, to say the least. Craven reportedly wanted a happier ending, in which Nancy defeats Freddy once and for all. The film's producers, however, insisted on the scarier and open-ended conclusion to prepare for a possible sequel. This could be seen as cynical ploy aimed at making more money. But perhaps it was also a recognition that as much as audiences were rooting for Nancy to defeat Freddy, they were also rooting for another story, another chance to watch young people like themselves desperately fighting against Freddy and all the secrets, lies, and anxieties he (dis)embodies.

The Matrix (1999)

A big-budget science fiction adventure story, *The Matrix* fused several genres into one heady, hyperkinetic mix. The film has elements of a Western, a futuristic apocalypse, a martial arts film, a psychological thriller, a romance, and a dream-within-a-dream fantasy. Written and directed by the siblings Andy and Lana Wachowski, it starred Keanu Reeves as mild-mannered office worker Thomas Anderson, also known as "Neo" and "The One." Laurence Fishburne plays Morpheus, Neo's guide through the various levels of reality. Carrie-Anne Moss is Neo's love interest Trinity, and Hugo Weaving portrays Neo's primary foe, the mentally unhinged Agent Smith. A huge critical and commercial success, *The Matrix* garnered four Academy Awards in 2000 for the technical categories of Best Film Editing, Best Sound, Best Sound Effects Editing, and Best Visual Effects. Two sequels were released in 2003: *The*

Matrix Reloaded and *The Matrix Revolutions*.

The setting appears to be contemporary, turn-of-the-millennium America. Thomas Anderson works like an ordinary person by day, while at night under the name "Neo" he enjoys an outlaw's life as a computer hacker. After meeting a beautiful hacker known as Trinity, he comes into contact with the infamous terrorist Morpheus. The next day, the police suddenly take Neo into custody. As the menacing, reality-bending Agent Smith interrogates him, Neo realizes something is more fundamentally wrong with his situation. Eventually Neo accepts Morpheus's offer to "take the red pill," and he awakens into what is truly the real world—a future in which the earth is a scorched desert and robots have taken control, using captive humans as batteries to provide energy for the machines. Neo resists believing this is true, and he resists even more the faith of Morpheus that Neo is "The One," meaning the heroic individual destined to defeat the machines and restore the freedom of humankind. Morpheus teaches Neo how to reenter the computer-generated dream world of the Matrix, back into the "real" world as most people experience it, and use the powers of his own heightened awareness to turn the Matrix against the machines, destroying their power over his mind. Neo must brave many hazards in this process, including a spoon-bending boy, a cookie-baking Oracle, the treachery of one of Morpheus's team members, dozens and dozens of heavily armed security guards, and the relentless Agent Smith. In a final showdown with Agent Smith, Neo seems to die, but Trinity's kiss rouses him to a final burst of energy that enables him to rise up again. Neo, now truly The One, serenely transcends the computer reality in which Agent Smith exists and thereby destroys him.

The film's popularity derived in large part from its exciting action sequences—gravity-defying fights, spectacular chases, dazzling future technologies, and "guns, lots of guns." Its appeal also came from the intriguing and thought-provoking philosophical premise that sets the action in motion, a premise that essentially boils down to the classic question of how we can ever know whether the real waking world we seem to be inhabiting is real or just a dream. *The Matrix* turns that question into the setting for a grand adventure. What if an unlikely hero, imprisoned within that dreaming unreality, learned how to break free? The lessons that Neo learns so as to accomplish this quest are very similar to the methods of lucid dream induction discussed in several chapters of this book: open your mind, pay constant and close attention to your surroundings, keep your emotions in

check, don't get scared, don't allow ego desires to distract you, trust absolutely in your abilities, and trust in those who love you. Once Neo overcomes his fear of the dream world within the Matrix, he discovers that he has awesome powers and can perform amazing feats in that world. The climax of the movie is similar to the finales of *Dreamscape* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* in portraying an ultimate battle between two masters of lucid dreaming, one good and one evil. Neo's victory is a victory for the ultimate freedom of human consciousness.

The Matrix appeared at a time of pre-millennial excitement and ambivalence about technology. The stock market was abuzz with new Internet companies promising to revolutionize the way we do everything. Public worries grew that as the year 2000 approached, the world's computer systems might crash because of possible problems associated with a date shift from years starting with 19__ to years starting with 20__ (the "Y2K" bug). *The Matrix* skillfully wove these swirling cultural trends into a story that presented technology as simultaneously terrifying, unstoppable, destructive, extremely cool, and mystically enlightening. By means of gaining awareness within the dream world, one could follow a path to higher consciousness (the film memorably ended with the song "Wake Up!" by the band Rage Against the Machine). *The Matrix* conveyed a prescient sense that the future will belong not to those who can best manipulate technology, but to those who are best at dreaming.

Waking Life (2001)

Richard Linklater wrote and directed this innovative and playfully philosophical movie, using rotoscope animation to create a cinematic world that is simultaneously grounded in ordinary reality and yet completely untethered and fantastical. Wiley Wiggins plays the protagonist, a young man who floats through a series of conversations and encounters with other people as he tries to determine what exactly distinguishes dreaming from waking life —his own or anyone else's. Ethan Hawke and Julie Delpy appear in the film for a scene in which they play their same characters, Jesse and Celine, from one of Linklater's earlier films, *Before Sunrise* (1995). In contrast to the other films considered in this chapter, *Waking Life* is less of a fantasy adventure

and more of an ever-deepening contemplation of the fundamental relationship between dreaming and waking experiences.

The film's plot emerges slowly and subtly. The unnamed protagonist passively and quietly observes ordinary people in ordinary situations, pondering the deepest of existential questions about free will, consciousness, and a host of other intellectual and cultural topics. At first the protagonist is confused by the indeterminacy of what is real and what is a dream, but he later realizes he can accept that uncertainty and become a more active agent in this world, exploring its surprising contours and trying to learn something from it. However, as the film goes on, his gloomy sense of being ultimately trapped only worsens as he wonders if he will ever be able to truly wake up. Indeed, at some moments it seems possible he has just died, and the whole film is a process of "lucid dying" that requires letting go of attachments to the waking world. The audience is gradually drawn into his metaphysical dilemma, helped along by several scenes that do not feature the protagonist at all, essentially putting the audience in his position, so we experience the flow of the story as he does. The final scene has the protagonist walking into a driveway and then slowly flying off into the blue sky. This image forms a bookend with the opening scene of a child floating in the same driveway. It is not a perfect narrative circle like *Dead of Night*, because a passage of time separates the child from the man, but *Waking Life* does conclude with an open-ended nonconclusion. We may not be able to tell for sure if we are awake or dreaming—*but we can fly.*

The movie's unique visual style won it many awards and critical plaudits. The actors were initially filmed using ordinary cameras, then animated using the rotoscope technique to paint new images that more or less represented the original filmed images. Linklater used multiple teams of animators to work on different parts of the film, helping create an overall sense of a dreamy, constantly shifting realm somewhere between the waking world and pure fantasy. Along the way the protagonist receives some advice and wisdom about lucid dreaming that echo teachings found elsewhere in this book. For example, one character (Guy Forsyth) tells him, "The trick is to combine your waking rational abilities with the infinite possibilities of your dreams. Because, if you can do that, you can do anything." Another character (Man on the Train) connects lucid dreaming with the cultural challenges of our moment in history:

> Things have been tough lately for dreamers. They say dreaming is dead, no one does it anymore. It's not dead, it's just that it's been forgotten, removed from our language. Nobody teaches it so nobody knows it exists. The dreamer is banished to obscurity. Well, I'm trying to change all that, and I hope you are too. By dreaming, every day. Dreaming with our hands and dreaming with our minds. Our planet is facing the greatest problems it's ever faced, ever. So whatever you do, don't be bored, this is absolutely the most exciting time we could have possibly hoped to be alive. And things are just starting.

Waking Life has several elements that reflect Linklater's familiarity with current lucid dreaming research. For example, characters in the film have difficulty reading time on their digital watches, and light switches have a weird habit of malfunctioning—both of which are ideas discussed by Stephen LaBerge in his books on lucid dreaming.[10] Even though it is an animated film, *Waking Life* presents an impressively realistic appraisal of lucid dreaming experience. What distinguishes the movie is that it does not treat lucid dreaming as an arena of heroic or romantic adventure, but rather as an authentic psychological experience that cannot be understood by reducing it to something else. It must be explored on its own terms to discover its relevance and value for our lives. Linklater is clearly not in the business of giving neat and tidy answers, but the main thrust of this film seems to be, *keep asking the questions*.

Inception (2010)

One of the most commercially successful films of all time, *Inception* is a science fiction adventure story written and directed by Christopher Nolan. The immense popularity of two of his earlier films, *Batman Begins* (2005) and *The Dark Knight* (2008), gave Nolan an unusually high degree of financial support and creative license in the making of *Inception.* Set in a near-future world where shadowy professionals known as "extractors" use a combination of drugs and electronics to enter other people's dreams and either steal information or implant it by means of "inception," the movie stars Leonardo DiCaprio as Dom Cobb, an extractor trying to get out of the business. The film won four Academy Awards for Cinematography, Sound Mixing, Sound Editing, and Visual Effects; it was also nominated for Best Original Screenplay and Best Picture of the Year. Its tagline was "Your mind is the scene of the crime."

The basic plot of the movie can be stated fairly simply, although it becomes extremely complex and convoluted along the way. Cobb and his team are given a job by a powerful, ruthless businessman: incept the mind of a rival CEO with a financially ruinous idea. The main obstacle to succeeding in this job turns out to be Cobb's own emotional instability. The process of entering another person's dreams requires the extractor to bracket out his or her own emotions and memories, and Cobb finds it increasingly difficult to do that because he is still mourning the recent death of his wife, Mal (Marion Cotillard). He agrees to the dangerous job because he is desperate to get back to his children, and the businessman promises to clear Cobb's legal problems and reunite him with his family if he will perform the inception. But as the story unfolds, Cobb's unresolved feelings of grief, sadness, and guilt over Mal's death create a horribly threatening situation for the other members of his team who are sharing his dreamspace. Their plan to incept the rival CEO, Robert Fischer (Cillian Murphy), involves the creation of three separate levels of dreaming so they can plant the self-destructive idea sufficiently deeply in his mind to prevent him from detecting it as an artificial notion. The team member responsible for designing all these levels is an architecture graduate student, Ariadne (Ellen Page), who realizes the dream world's stability is being endangered by Cobb's inability to control his feelings and memories of Mal. She confronts him, and Cobb finally admits to her that he and Mal had tried experimenting with shared lucid dreaming to see how far they could go. They ended up in a timeless limbo that was difficult to escape and did lasting harm to Mal's mental grip on reality; she eventually committed suicide by jumping from a tall building, convinced that by dying in this dream world she would wake up in the real one—an idea that Cobb had incepted into her as a desperate means of getting her out of limbo.

As the inception job commences and the team goes deeper and deeper into Robert Fischer's mind, Ariadne helps Cobb pull away from his guilty obsession with Mal to focus on surviving the multiple levels of frantic chasing, fighting, falling, shooting, and exploding objects so they can escape the dream world with their bodies and sanity intact. The film ends with Cobb finally getting back home to his children. He takes out his "totem," a top whose spinning is a test of reality: if it keeps spinning, you are still in a dream, but if it stops spinning, you are in the waking world. Cobb spins his totem. It wobbles slightly . . . then the screen goes black.

In addition to all the heart-stopping big-budget action that Nolan knew

how to generate from his work with the two Batman movies, *Inception* includes a great deal of thoughtful reflection about the nature and possibilities of dreaming experience. A particularly notable scene involves Cobb and Ariadne sitting together at a café, where Cobb initiates her into the idea that she is having a lucid dream by manipulating their surroundings so the buildings and city streets bend up and over their heads as if it were a piece of origami paper. He points out to her that dreams "feel real while we're in them, right? It's only when we wake up that we realize something was actually strange." The antagonist in the story is not some demonic figure, but Cobb's own subconscious: he must fight to overcome the gravitational pull of his guilt over Mal's death; otherwise, he will never again be able to live freely and securely in the waking world. He appears to succeed in this effort, but the film's ambiguous ending leaves open the possibility that Cobb has been betrayed and is still trapped in yet another level of the dream world.

Inception certainly suggests that it is a bad idea to delve too deeply into the dream world without enough psychological stability to withstand the pressures. In contrast to *Peter Ibbetson*, where shared lucid dreaming is portrayed as a lush and joyful escape from oppressive waking reality, here it appears as a barren and emotionally deadening trap that can be escaped only by a final, agonizing renunciation. *Inception* is pervaded by falling imagery, from the crumbling buildings of limbo to Mal's suicidal plunge, and the emotional tone is dark and grim. There is little of the levity or playfulness that we find even in horror movies like *A Nightmare on Elm Street* or *Dead of Night*, and none of the world-saving heroism of *Dreamscape* or *The Matrix* (Cobb's dream mission amounts to helping one mega-corporation defeat another mega-corporation). The potentials of lucid dreaming in *Inception* are rendered vividly, but narrowly.

Closing Observations

Of course, we could pursue several fascinating lines of discussion about the relations between these films, and we could easily expand the list of films to include several others that creatively explore the porous boundaries of waking and dreaming [*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004), *Donnie Darko* (2001), and *Sucker Punch* (2011) come to mind]. In the interest of

space, however, we can make only a few brief observations.

These films, taken together, represent an important development from the "Hollywood Freudianism" of films like Alfred Hitchcock's *Spellbound* (1945). Typically in the Freud-inflected plot, a character must resolve a mystery (á la Oedipus) to resolve the plot and achieve stability, happiness, success, and autonomy. The mystery may be presented as a very *non*lucid dream in the Freudian model—confused, bizarre material that is dimly glimpsed and must be sorted out by consciousness, aided of course by the kind of clever interpretive connections evoked by psychoanalytic method. In the films discussed in this chapter, lucid dreaming is the occasion not for self-analysis, but for *seeing through to the illusory quality of the subjective as well as social experience*. The characters use this recognition as the power to break through to a truer sense of things and, therefore, to a larger conception of self and reality. A simple way to put it is that films grounded in a psychoanalytic view of self seem to give way to those grounded in something like a Buddhist doctrine of illusion.

This shift can be seen in *Dead of Night* as it pursues the increasingly tense *agon* between Walter Craig's dream world and Dr. van Straaten's psychiatric explanations to its shocking homicidal conclusion. For Dr. van Straaten, it is a given that not only these fantastic tales but also dreams themselves are fantasies, and that they must be reduced to data about the individual's neuroses—that is, maladjustments to an inescapable social regime grounded in a rational approach to the nature of reality itself. Walter Craig becomes the "madman" whose anomalous experience threatens to destabilize the agreed-upon social norms and, therefore, the shared understanding of reality itself. One might say that Walter is straining toward lucidity, toward a moment of awareness when he can see through it all—but he falls back into the same cycle of dreaming ignorance and loses his chance for transcendence.

This is not to say that psychoanalysis has no relevance in the study of these films. On the contrary, every one of the films contains an abundance of sexual images, symbols, themes, and interactions that practically beg for psychoanalytic interpretation. *A Nightmare on Elm Street* offers an especially vivid example of this, as Freddy's dreaming assaults on Nancy become increasingly sexual, casting her struggle as one of surviving the perilous psycho-social transition into sexual maturity. It is worth pointing out that Nancy is the only female protagonist in these films—all the rest have males

at the center of their stories, although many women (Mary in *Peter Ibbetson*, Trinity in *The Matrix*, Ariadne in *Inception*) can more than hold their own in the dream world.

The intermingling of lucid dreaming and shared dreaming—a doubling of the fantastic—enables each film to raise potent real-world questions about oppressive social and political structures governing the lives of their audiences. These movies exploit the idea that lucidity, as a process of becoming aware that one is living in fantasy, may be the only means of escape from (or transcendence beyond) an imaginary but collective mindset that completely controls the subjective experience of the individual. This theme may sometimes get lost amid all the special effects and convoluted plotlines, but it represents an ultimately optimistic sense of the open-ended potential of dreaming that seems to endure despite the most terrifying threats and cataclysmic dangers. *Waking Life* is especially important in this regard because it invites its audience to transcend the view that dreams must be analyzed, or utilized for some specific purpose, or reduced into rational terms. Instead, it is precisely the radical *otherness* of dreaming that makes it worth exploring in its own terms, as a mode of existence different from but no less authentic than that which we experience in waking.

Notes

1. See Chapter 7, "Film Studies," in Philip King et al., *Dreaming in the Classroom: Practices, Methods, and Resources in Dream Education* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2011). See also James Walters, *Alternative Worlds in Hollywood Cinema* (Chicago: Intellect, 2008); Leslie Halpern, *Dreams on Film: The Cinematic Struggle between Art and Science* (London: McFarland & Company, 2003); Robert T. Eberwein, *Film and the Dream Screen: A Sleep and a Forgetting* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984); Thorsten Botz-Bornstein, ed., *Inception and Philosophy* (Chicago: Open Court, 2011); Kelly Bulkeley, *Visions of the Night: Dreams, Religion, and Psychology* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999), especially Chapter 11, "Dreamily Deconstructing the Dream Factory: *The Wizard of Oz* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street*," and Chapter 12, "Dreams within Films, Films within Dreams."
2. Fragment 89, http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Fragments_of_Heraclitus.
3. *Upanishads*, trans. P. Olivelle (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1996), 59 ff.
4. Carl Gustav Jung, "General Aspects of Dream Psychology," in *Dreams*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), 52.
5. Ibid.
6. Frederick Perls, "Dream Seminars," in *Gestalt Therapy Now,* ed. J. F. Shepherd and I. L. Shepherd (New York: Harper Colophon, 1970), 204-233.

7. http://www.science20.com/science_20/dead_night_horror_movie_inspired_hoyles_steady_state_m73265.
8. See Shelly Adler, *Sleep Paralysis: Night-Mares, Nocebos, and the Mind-Body Connection*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011).
9. G. William Domhoff, *The Mystique of Dreams: A Search for Utopia through Senoi Dream Theory* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985).
10. Stephen LaBerge and Howard Rheingold, *Exploring the World of Lucid Dreaming* (New York: Ballantine, 1990).

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8

A Dervish's Sojourn in the Realm of Lucid Dreams

Mehrdad Fakour

Inception

My deepest gratitude to the wild dervishes, love-drunk Sufis, great mahasiddhas, Tibetan lamas, Taoist monks, crazy shamans, and lucid dreamers, who are guides to the lonely wayfarers in the mystical wilderness. It may be anachronistic to expound on the arduous methods of a mystic's ways in an age in which designer drugs rocket the impatient in and out of fantasyland. Nonetheless, this is an offering to the introspective seeker who wishes to perambulate and make the journey a gift of one's life.

"The alchemical metamorphosis required to make a diamond is the same as making a loaf of bread." A wandering dervish, who appeared madder than wise and older than the mountains, introduced me to the Sufi dream practice with this simile. I surmise that this is the nature of Crazy Wisdom and the way of a Trickster Teacher. He stated that all inert elements, when brought together under pressure and heat, would in time produce such marvels as diamonds and breads. Human Sufis must also apply the same principles to themselves if they wish to transform the dross of their bodies and minds into an eternal jewel. Then, with a thoughtful grin, the dervish added, "Of course, the diamond is always there; we just need to polish it." This contradiction and paradox is a major element of Sufi teaching, and a mind-warping experience in the mystical imagination.

Sufis, like their shaman and yogi cousins who drum and dance all night, feast on potions and sacraments, or practice yoga *nidra* (Sanskrit) and radiant light (*ozel*, Tibetan) are pathfinders of the liminal world. The goal is to maintain the vibrational level that allows them to enter the non-dual state of

dissolution and subsistence in Divine (*fana* and *bagha*, Arabic), similar to the notion of non-duality of *turiya* (Sanskrit) found in Indian schools, *parinirvana* (Sanskrit) of Buddhism, and *rigpa* (Tibetan) of Dzogchen and its ultimate goal of desolation of the physical body into the Rainbow Body (*jalus*, Tibetan). Invariably, a deeply relaxed body, focused intention, and alert and equanimous mind are cultivated to enter with awareness into hypnagogic state and to continue into other stages and cycles of sleep and dreaming. The dream world becomes another arena for the Sufis to discover the Real Body (*jism haqiqi*, Arabic) and achieve mastery of it. Comprehension of this Original Body (*jism aslli*, Arabic) or Celestial or Sacred Body (*wujud al-aqdas*, Arabic) is indispensable. The psycho-spiritual practices during the waking hours are intended to facilitate the awareness and focus during the dream state.

Consciousness has degrees and stages; dream lucidity is a stage of awareness that, if maintained and combined with intention, can surpass the limited but familiar awareness and physical capability of the nonsleep state. Awakeness implies certain awareness, presence, choice in action, and mastery over one's moods and emotions, which may not be true in everyday nonsleep or sleep states. The dreaming mind is like a still pool; a tiny pebble sets off ripples in every direction. Meditation, dream incubation (*istikhara*, Arabic), and other practices offer an opportunity to calm this pool and see the nature of reality as it is, not as we assume it to be.

Lucidity in dreams may be accompanied by fright, excitement, bafflement, and other strangeness. However, a calm attitude with abiding detachment and maintained awareness with intense focus may let us enter an unknown yet familiar place that evokes a longing for a journey in our neglected interior life. We may enter the inner landscape of our core beliefs, fears, neuroses, creativities, and forgotten histories; beyond that (if we have courage, stamina, and unwavering determination), we could trek beyond the land of archetypes and begin an odyssey toward self-realization.

Bittersweet Plays of Mind

Much search and research has convinced me that nonmystics can experience mystical states involuntarily during dreaming, psychosis, extreme situations

such as childbirth, the use of entheogens, and other circumstances. Scientists who study the altered states brought on by LSD, DMT, and other hallucinogens, as well as neuroscientists who study depression, bipolarity, and different neurological disturbances, have found parallels between their subjects and those experiences reported by Sufis, yogis, and monks during their vigils and practices. At times it is difficult to distinguish one person's hallucination from another's mystical vision. The mystic's dark night of the soul—just before reaching a euphoric state—is not unlike the periods of profound depression and terror reported by people who have had breakdowns.

The difference lies between an unprepared mind and a well-trained one. The disciplined person has stamina in the body, clarity and concentration of mind, and an open attitude toward any possibility without expectation and attachment. The skilled mind has poise, equanimity, acceptance, and complete release and surrender, which will enable it to cross the delusional territory and not be trapped by the inevitable mirage and phantasmagoria. The mystic knows the bittersweet plays of her mind and, like a child, wonders, laughs, and cries at the bouncing bubbles of thoughts and images that come from nowhere and disappear to nowhere. She knows the froth hides a deep ocean, and dive she must to reach the precious pearl. Like the medieval knight, she must enter the dark and pathless forest with her courage and conviction (*tawakul*, Arabic).

Practice is of paramount import. Essentially, Sufi teaching is heuristic with an occasional didacticism thrown in to appease the intellectual mind. Very early on, I came to understand that lucidity, on its own, was just another thrilling but fleeting distraction for the restless and dualistic mind. The real work is the alchemical transformation of consciousness; lucid dreaming is a tool at the disposal of the mystic. It is a useful device for deciphering the nature of the mind and its powers of creation and manifestation. It exposes how our tendencies, desires, fears, and belief systems can affect the nature of apparitions, appearances, and our feelings in the dream state and the ordinary nonsleep states. The use of similes, metaphors, Anacreontic poems, and parables, like dreams, is an ancient ploy to help the neophyte grasp the nature of mind and gain knowledge directly through imagination.

The practice of lucidity and its stabilization is considered by some Sufis to be a blessing, like other psychic gifts that are by-products of the practitioner's relentless effort toward self-knowledge. Moreover, the Sufi

assumes that these gifts (*kramat*, Arabic; *siddhis* in yoga, Sanskrit) are not self-generated, but rather are bestowed from the Divine source. The Sufi approach to *everything* is that the aspirant works hard and flawlessly without any expectation of gain; if that effort pleases God, then various gifts are granted. The seeker does not expect or look for these gifts and will turn away when they manifest. Of course, the astute observer can see the psychological merit of such assumption. It encourages action for its own sake and curtails ego's desire to be cynosure of all eyes. As Rabia, a female Sufi from the eighth century expressed, God should not be sought for fear of hell or pleasure of heaven, but rather for His own sake. Centuries later, mystics like St. Teresa of Avila, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Dominic, and St. John of the Cross were inspired by the relentless devotion and utter surrender by their Sufi sisters and brothers.

Unity of All

Sufi's core tenet is this: there is nothing but God, including the one who makes this proclamation. The average Muslim delights at the proclamation (*shahada*, Arabic), "There is no god but God." However, the enlightened Sufi knows from experience that this is dualistic thinking. The honest believer does not realize that he is creating "I," the witness, who is giving evidence that there is "He," the God. Such a perception is an act of hubris, if not blasphemy (*shirk*, Arabic), in the mind of self-annihilated Sufi. Hence, Al-Hallaj, the 10th-century Persian Sufi, claimed, "I am the Truth" (*ana al-Haqq*, Arabic), and was hanged for blasphemy. However, Al-Hallaj's point was that there is no "Al-Hallaj" or "anything else" except God. It was the pious Muslim clergy who were committing blasphemy and not Al-Hallaj, who had seen beyond the Veil. The Sufi sees the word *Allah* as one complete cycle of breath; inspiration, expiration, and emptiness. Allah, "The Breath." In Persian, too, the word for god is *khoda*, for which Sufis contrive a pun by a slight pause between the pronunciation of the word *khod*, meaning "self," and the suffix *-a*, implying "awakening or arriving at," therefore suggesting "come to thyself" or "awaken to thyself."

Rumi, the great 13th-century Persian Sufi poet, expressed the same idea in one of his parables. In this story, the lover goes to the door of his beloved

and knocks. A voice from within asks, "Who is there?" The despondent lover, with pangs of separation, shouts, "Oh my beloved, it is I." The voice from within cries out, "Go away; there is no room for you and 'I.' " The dejected lover, after much anguish and contemplations, comes back and knocks again. The voice from within asks, "Who is there?" The Sufi cries out, "It is you, my beloved! It is YOU!" The door opens.

The symbolism of the inner pearl in Sufism is the recognition of this cherished inner wisdom, which is like a grain of sand that is transformed into a precious pearl. The Sufi dances, spinning intoxicated with tears of love transmuting her illusions and shackles of ignorance. The paradox is that, when balancing the grip of our ego with the arrival of grace, one is needed to cross the street and the other is required to touch the face of God. Finally, one has a deep realization that there is no difference between one's own existence and every other creature's. All have equal merits. One finds everything, including misfortune, to be a blessing and is grateful to *be*.

The mystic recognizes that most of his battles are within the realm of his own perception and acculturations. He understands that language and culture color his thinking. Hence, the Sufi's interest in poetry, double-entendre, and use of the language of love, wine, and sensuality to provoke friction and discomfort—like the grain of sand in the oyster. The mind of the pious novice, caught between the provincial dogma of orthodoxy of his religion, his cultural notions of how to be, and the suppressed urges of his human nature, is combined with Sufi praxis that evanesce the edifices of his mind. Before long, the ensuing states of chaos, paradox, tension, and crisis bring about the state of catharsis and metamorphosis. Like a Zen *koan* that triggers the creative insight and annihilates the narrow view, the Sufi practices awaken the sight of the seeker. He perceives that each creature, through its own development and interaction with its environment, has found a way to experience the world that serves its survival purposes—a bee, a bat, and a buzzard have awareness of the environment through different senses that are inconceivable to the others. The Sufi discerns that the appearance and experience of the world vary based on his frame of reference and the tuning of his sensory apparatus.

The benefits of praxis in the dream state are that our reference point shifts more easily and that we may experience and access knowledge that is not readily available in the nondream state. Moreover, when we are confronted with paradoxes, strangeness, and oddities, there is less chance of shock and

bewilderment. The beauty of the system is that it will take dreamers to a state appropriate to their level of assimilation. Dreaming in the *lingua franca* of symbols, metaphors, anagrams, and palindromes can present multilayered meanings and has the advantage of circumventing the censorship of the ego and social taboos.

Advanced Sufis can decipher (*ta'wil*, Arabic) dream contents like someone solving a Sunday crossword puzzle. The guide (*pir*, Persian; literally "the elder"), upon studying a novice's dream, will know the degree of her capacity and accordingly will instruct her. Levels, stages, or stations (*maghamat*, Arabic) are many and not relevant to our present discussion; rather, what matters is the experience and understanding (*edraak*, Arabic) and stabilization of what is experienced and learned, which will lead gradually to discovery (*kashf*, Arabic) and gnosis (*irfaan*, Arabic). Dream practice will speed up this process and make the journey more interesting and insightful. More importantly, the learning becomes holistic and its trajectory more spiral-like than hierarchical.

When intuitive insights (*ilhaam*, Arabic) start to blossom and emerge from the background, one can increase their frequency and intensity with deeper and more relaxed focusing. At the beginning, vague feelings, amorphous thoughts, and misty premonitions will occur randomly. Gradually, they may increase in occurrence and clarity. A faint feeling may give way to a strong urge, inspiration, idea, mental image, or physical reaction. Without any prior knowledge of an issue or a particular situation, these feelings and ideas may provide an irrefutable intuitive insight and breakthrough discovery. The average person may occasionally experience such insights. By comparison, among Sufi dream-practitioners, these occurrences are prevalent and considered markers of progress. There are other signposts, too: the appearance of colored lights, heat in the body, sequenced lucid dreams, dreams of other realities or lifetimes, precognitions, prophetic dreams, and so on. One finds similar occurrences in other traditions such as Tibetan dream yoga, dark retreats, and deity praxes. However, Sufis' approach to dream practices and the ensuing manifestations is different. This may have something to do with the way dreams are treated in the Islamic context.

Islam, Sufism, and Dreams

Sufism flourished within the context of Islamic civilization and the ancient Near Eastern cultures, both of which are of paramount significance in developing interest in a certain category of practices that seek to cultivate spirituality and knowledge of the pleromic world through dreams. Sufis have benefited from and encouraged the heightened interest, value, and significance that Middle Easterners in general, and Muslims in particular, accord to dreams. Among the monotheistic religions, perhaps, Islam is unique in its focus on *oneirology*, or the study of dreams.

Many scholars of Islam have wondered aloud at the importance of dreams in Islamic societies. The general consensus is that the depth and richness of Islamic oneirology, oneiromancy, and oneirocriticism are unsurpassed by any other culture or civilization that has taken an interest in this art and science. Despite centuries of imperial war and invasions by Mongols, Turks, and crusaders, widespread obliteration and burning of many cities and their libraries and universities, and sometimes the total massacre of their populace, we still find an amazing legacy of oneirology. Some years ago on a trip to Tehran, when browsing bookstores, I was surprised to see a prevalence of books about dreams in both Middle Eastern and European languages, ranging from medieval writers such as Ibn-Sina, al-Ghazali, and Ibn Arabi to popular modern ones. The Arabic text ascribed to Ibn Sirin was found next to Annemarie Schimmel's German text of *Die Traume des Kalifen*, adjacent to a yellowed copy of Patricia Garfield's *Creative Dreaming*, followed by a manual of the Chinese approach to deciphering dream symbols. The volumes went on for row after row. It was satisfying to discover such a plenteous farrago, and I was reminded of scholar John Lamoreaux's discussion of the staggering number of medieval Muslim texts on dreams.[1] Clearly, the interest in this topic is not waning.

The genesis of Islam in ancient Near East and Mediterranean cultures, by necessity, made it the inheritor of the largest and richest body of oneirocriticism. However, the culture of oneriography, interpretation, and significant attention paid to dreams was not only part of the ancient world of the Near East; it was re-inaugurated by the Prophet himself. In addition to his famous night journey and visions (which are some of the core elements in Islamic tradition), Muslims enjoy citing that the Prophet took special interest in interpreting the dreams of his family, friends, and even strangers. Although the Quran contains few references regarding dreams and dream interpretation, this has not dampened the interest in dreams over the centuries, particularly

among Sufis who often receive teaching and transmissions in dream states. The term *uwaisi* (Arabic), named after the Muslim mystic Uwais al-Qarni, when Persianized and in plural form (*Oveysiyaan*), is a reference to the mystics who have received spiritual transmissions from either a noncorporeal master or an incarnate teacher, but in the dream state.

From the Sufi perspective, the daily rituals of Muslims such as ablution, the recital call to prayer, the contemplation following the prayer, and the movements of the ritual prayer, which symbolically are the reenactments of birth, death, and resurrection cycles, are in and of themselves a form of preparation and incubation (*Istikhara*, Arabic) for clear dreams as well as theophanic ones (dreams from the Source). The epiphany of the Prophet in his dreams becomes a model for Sufis. Although some may equate theophanic dreams with receiving revelations, songs, and messages, my own view has shifted after reflection and study of many of these dreams. Dreams of Gudea, King Astyages, Alexander of Macedon, Harriet Tubman, Abraham Lincoln, Adolf Hitler, Paul McCartney, and Namkhai Norbu, and even some of the dreams of prophets and saints, although extraordinary, are not necessarily theophanic. They seem to be a flash of intuitive insight, relevant to the dreamer's orientation, circumstance, and accumulated knowledge.

I know from personal experience that these dreams rarely emerge from a vacuum. Some years ago I ventured to study Vajra dance, for which Norbu Rinpoche had received the idea in a dream. The first time I practiced this dance, I could not help but notice the similarities between the Sufi-inspired Gurdjieff movements and its amalgamation with the traditional Tibetan dances. Upon further investigation, I found that Norbu had witnessed Gurdjieff dances; in fact, early on in his career, he had moved his school into one of the facilities used by Gurdjieff's followers. This is not to imply imitation (or worse), but rather to suggest that as with Kekule's, Coleridge's, and Tarttini's dreams, a synthesis of prior knowledge had led to a new creative inspiration in the magic cauldron of dreams. Reflections, inspirations, and sudden shifts of perspective to its complementary side (*enantiodromia*, Greek) can bring about deep insights and uncontained creative bursts that at times can be astonishing.

Silk Road of Mysticism

Mystics are travelers and seekers, and as they move, they disseminate and contribute knowledge and praxes to other seekers and cultures. For instance, I see a great deal of influence from Zoroastrianism and Sufism in Bon and Dzogchen philosophy and practices, as well as a huge impact of Sufism on Cabalistic and Christian mysticisms. Ideas also travel in other forms. Informed and alert readers of Shakespeare, Cervantes, French and Spanish literature, Irish epics, and Grail stories will be remiss if they do not notice the great similarities to Persian and Arab epics that were brought into Europe from every direction.

Greco-Roman cultures are also thought to have made significant contributions to the Islamic world. Expressly, there are constant references to Artemidorus's work and its profound effect on the Muslim oneiriocrats. I believe this is inaccurate and exaggerated. Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Akkadian, Persian, and Egyptian literature and historical texts such as the Jewish Torah, which itself has drawn heavily on these earlier cultures, bear witness to a few millennia of rich history of oneirology in the Ancient Near East. These indigenous materials are fountainheads for the later Greco-Roman material, not the other way around.

Artemidorus himself states that he drew upon numerous writings that came before him and collected valuable material in his extensive travels from other diviners and oneirologists from the East. This oversight is also apparent in modern scholarship when it comes to the founders of psychiatry, like Freud and Jung, who are credited with the introduction of dream interpretation. Perhaps to the European world, but not in Eastern or Far Eastern cultures, as this science has never died. The ancient Near Easterners had already invented the rug-covered couch, the dream interpreter, and the dream interpretation routine millennia earlier.

Muslim oneirology was well established long before Artemidorus's collected works were translated into Arabic—a fact that is acknowledged by less than handful of Western scholars, but ignored by others. Another aspect that has been overlooked is that even the cultures we associate with being the major contributors to Greek culture (such as Mycenaean and Minoan) were themselves offshoots of earlier Near Eastern cultures. The Minoan language was very closely related to the Elamite language of southwestern Iran. Hellenic culture was the marriage of Greco-Persian cultures. Moreover, much of what we believe to be Greek culture, art, architecture, and mythology comes directly from Hittites, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia, and Indus Valley

civilizations.

For millennia, Greece was receiving populations, goods, art, and culture from North Africa and the Near East. At the time of Alexander's conquest of the Persian Empire, Greece was a mere backwater of the great civilizations of the known world. After the conquest of the Persian Empire, Greece became the inheritor of several mature and successive empires that were already embedded in one another like a Russian matryoshka doll.

This brief and informal survey should give us some point of reference for the interconnectedness of these cultures and the significance of dreams in Near Eastern societies. It also may help us understand their prominence in the later Islamic culture as well as the deference offered to their meanings. Another important aspect has likewise been overlooked in the scholarship concerning the significance of dreams in Islamic thinking—namely, the proclivity and the penchant of this faith for abstraction and symbolism. Dreams, in the Islamic world, are all about ideas, concepts, and symbols representing and pointing to larger notions and possibilities.

Dream Tourism and Lucid Expeditions

The exercise of lucid dreaming has the same purpose in the Sufi tradition as it does in other ancient systems that practice conscious dreaming as a method and means toward spiritual unfoldment. Through training and deeper scholarship, one can see that two strains have created this practice. One strain is the external one, such as the philosophies and praxes that have been transmitted from Sufism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Tibetan Bon, Dzogchen, and perennial shamanistic practices. The other strain is an internal one, which I came to recognize from my own personal experiences.

As my horizon broadened, it became clear that spending time to develop lucidity in dreams just for the sake of visiting Paris on the cheap or having illicit sex with a forbidden partner was not the purpose of this art (as has been propagated by some writers, popular radio programs, and TV shows in the past half-century). During a period lasting a few years, I was troubled by many lucid dreams with an uncanny precognitive twist to them. I use the word "troubled" because there are times when even the extraordinary can become bewildering and a nuisance, particularly when one lacks clarity on

their purpose and function. The whole notion of control, gain, and "better this or that" became an absurdity and contrary to the spirit of exploration. My intention is not to pass judgment on what others may say or want to popularize, for that has both merits and drawbacks. What I am suggesting is that there is a major difference between the delight of curiosity, wonderment, investigation, and self-discovery, which are the tenets of spiritual and mystical exploration, and the touristic approach to dream examination.

The spirit of exploration and observation is playful, open to possibility and the unexpected. Once the unanticipated shows up, the desire of the curious is to connect and learn, not to resist and recoil from it. The connection cannot be made through force, control, or desire for exploitation. The mindscape is not another territory to be colonized and tapped for treasures to serve the *egoic* self. What *is* required is a calm alertness and yielding psyche that longs to link with the mystery and spirit of the new terrain.

After a period of practice and experience, the internal guides and one's intuition proceed to give their own instructions; Jung's Philemon is an example, as are others reported by Black Elk, Edgar Casey, and Robert Monroe. On occasion, this inner intuitive connection could happen spontaneously, or because of certain conditions such as sickness, austerities and fasting, rituals of initiation, or other unusual circumstance, such as birthing or being in the battlefield. Like any good teaching that adjusts to the individual's capacity and cultural sensibilities, internal teaching calibrates itself to the natural inner inclinations of the practitioner—hence, as is the mantra of the Sufis, the wisdom of keeping the mirror of the heart cleansed and polished so that it does not distort that which it must reflect and transmit.

Initially, it is almost impossible to avoid the magic theater of our minds. My reference here is not to the beginning stages of lucid dreaming, with its bizarre imageries and landscapes, or of meditation, when one is experiencing the avalanche of fleeting thoughts, but rather to the later stages, when much deeper personal material and archetypal energies start to emerge. Further on, the experiences of the buoyant detachment or the nihilistic void state can also become very hard to move past. Nonetheless, one must persist and paradoxically try in a nonstriving way to bring the mind to relinquish its habit of projections, manufacturing, and wandering in realms where it could easily linger and get lost. Initially, even though wearisome, one must make the heroic effort to minimize the impact of one's baggage.

Sometimes, people who have spontaneous encounters with the appearance of a mind phenomenon, or spiritual epiphany, become unhinged or describe it in terms of their own religious orientation. Such archetypal apparitions become Jesus or Satan to Catholics, a jinn or the Holy Prophet to a Muslim, or some other thing to someone else. It is worth reflecting upon why a visionary state or dream causes one person to act like Friar Girolamo Savonarola, another like Nostradamus, and another like Swedenborg. I have seen Sufis and Tibetan monks who have had even deeper experience and knowledge than the aforementioned individuals, yet they go about their business quietly and unassumingly, without any compulsion to engage in prophecy or any desire to burn libraries or fill volumes with their pens.

A prudent practitioner who is wise to the frailty of human will and the tendency toward cravings and turpitude must remain vigilant of the twists and turns that our minds will take. Our altered states of consciousness during meditation and dream states can be affected by our persona. The classic magic mask in the fairy tales does not necessarily hide, but rather exaggerates what is inside. Every day in the news we find yet another story of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" magnitude regarding the private lives of our politicians, religious leaders, celebrities, and even common people. Anyone who has had the experience of dealing with someone in a state of psychosis, deep depression, or various mental and emotional breakdowns knows well that the individual has very little control over that state of mind. The states of contraction and expansion, euphoria and depression, fear and foolhardiness, and many other such experiences are common pitfalls that one must be aware of and prepare for so as to avoid unpleasant outcomes.

It is imperative to understand and know our minds, shadows, desires, and tendencies. Learning to relax within our core is as important as developing discipline and discriminating acumen to distinguish between the false siren voice and our true and wise muse. As the long history of fallen masters and endless scandals pertaining to various gurus, sheiks, and Rinpoches bears witness, this is a difficult feat to achieve.

Loving Our Coyotes

I have seen myself and many wonderful fellow travelers fall flat on our faces,

and we do not always have the necessary gumption to get up and continue. It is for this very reason that almost all traditions insist on many forms of purification, discipline, and selfless action. The wise know that our cravings, fears, desires, and incessant thoughts do not leave us alone so readily. The funny paradox is that they are part of the total package of wholeness. However, before that wholeness comes about, a lot of damage can be caused. That is why novices are watched very closely.

The friction caused by long-suppressed energies can become distracting at every turn, as does the energy stored for the ascension to the next turn of the spiral. Our desires and unfulfilled whims are like a pack of clever coyotes, busy planning and plotting their next unexpected pounce at the most inopportune and vulnerable moment. At times, it is fascinating to watch and see how beautifully we do ourselves in (the archetype of the Saboteur). Temporary satisfaction seems to be the obsession of our insatiable and humming minds. This makes it even more urgent to embrace it all with compassion, presence, and equable detachment.

I found it useful to dance with the clever coyote of my nature, rather than resist or reject it. I allow myself a certain amount of indulgence, foolishness, and sheepish behavior up front, provided that the coyote will allow me uninterrupted practice even when I am sanctimonious and painfully stubborn in my preprogrammed ways. I have discovered that making this devilish deal with my own desire-nature can be helpful in removing some of the obstacles and distractions.

It takes time to ease our fidgety bodies and replace our restless minds with the equilibrium of our hearts. It is even harder to quell the desire for instant action and gratification. With deep reflection, patience, and acceptance of our individual temperaments, we will arrive at the position where we can understand and appreciate the quirkiness of others and ourselves. We begin to comprehend why paradoxes, ambiguities, uncertainties, heterogeneities, and endless possibilities are part of this creative and unfathomable mystery of Life and Consciousness. Only in deep surrender can we see the panoramic majesty of this perpetual blockbuster production of the Cosmic Mind.

It is precisely our motley uniqueness that has created the various practices that are designed as methods to breach mind habits and create awareness in our dreams, and the use of that awareness as a path for the Big Mind

exploration. For me, each experience is a return to see the present moment more intensely from another spot on the spiral of my maturity. Sometimes during dreaming and other times while meditating, some deep insights and knowledge of subjects beyond my studies or normal realm of awareness will come into my consciousness, just by a slight shift in my perspective, or cause me to revisit experiences and events in totally new and unexpected ways.

What is interesting is that regardless of the materialism and scientism, most people on this planet acknowledge the spiritual aspect of life. This includes highly technologically advanced societies. Americans, who love to push buttons for everything, attend church more than anyone else. Japanese, who ride the bullet train and watch the astronauts on their iPhones, still believe in the spirit (*kami*) in everything.

Anthropologists such as Knud Rasmussen and Vladimir Bogoraz, and religious historians such as Mircea Eliade, despite their own different backgrounds, consistently reported similar observations about shamans' feats of healing, journeying in dream worlds and the realms of ancestors, and bringing back helpful information for their communities. Contemporary researchers, ethnographers, and anthropologists—like Wade Davis and Joan Halifax—echo this shared conclusion. During times of hardship, the medicine man's task is to dream and call upon the spirits of his ancestors to come and guide the people. We have worldwide evidence of dreaming and visioning among all cultures throughout history and prehistory. The therianthropic and ithyphallic figure paintings of the Paleolithic caves, Egyptian sleep temples, Greek Asklepieion dream temples, Australian Aborigines' dreamtime, Sioux medicine men, Black Elk's visions, and Paiute Indian Wovoka and his dream of the Ghost Dance—the list goes on.

A Glance in the Hall of Mirrors

Once, acting upon a suggestion by an old Sufi, I started a practice that consisted of prayers, fasting, specific meditations, mantra and chant of remembrance (*dhikr/zikr*, Arabic), breathing, vigils, and certain types of visualizations and movements for a specific number of times per day and number of days based on certain cycles. Quite frankly, upon completion of my last night of practice, I was very happy to see the end of this assignment.

It had taken a tremendous amount of time, energy, and commitment to do these practices, and I had not experienced anything worth mentioning except exhaustion.

The very night that the third cycle of practices was over, I had the following dream experience:

I was sitting on a very lush lawn amidst a beautiful garden, surrounded by unfamiliar ancient and elegant buildings. It was not clear to me why I had the sense that this place was very ancient, for the buildings were not in a state of disrepair or decrepitude. It was night and I could see the black, velvety sky above me; yet the whole garden was suffused with a warm golden-copper light. Across from where I sat, I could see an elegant room with curvaceously designed furnishing and bookshelves full of old gilded books, objets d'art of the finest wood, rare stones, precious metals and minerals, glass, tapestries, and other exquisite accouterments.

At first, I assumed that there was also a fireplace in the room, since I could clearly see the reflection of a lotus-shaped fire in the considerably large widow. However, I noticed that a man was also sitting cross-legged in the midst of the fire and was cheerfully grinning back at me. My initial curiosity instantaneously turned into total shock, when I realized that the man in the center of the flame in the glass was myself.

Horrified, I took my eyes off the glass and looked down. I was sitting in a cross-legged position with the green grass below me inside of the very flame that I had perceived in the glass. Despite the fact that I could see that I was not burning and that the green grass below was intact, I panicked in total terror and woke myself up, only to be confronted with an even stranger scene.

As I woke up, I could hear my wife's soft breathing, and could see our dark bedroom and all it contained, our newborn son sleeping in his crib nearby, the silhouette of the bushes behind the gauzy curtains of the windows, and much more—without turning my face towards those objects or their direction. Directly above my chest was a star-shaped, glowing blue light that was moving and pulsating over me. The whole room took on a multifaceted appearance, like those intricate architectural designs of Islamic monuments. Contemporaneously, I was experiencing the room as it was in everyday appearance, plus a superimposed multidimensional appearance that I had not noticed before. Surprised, I thought, "How could I not have noticed this obvious vastness and multidimensionality before?"

The superimposed supra-bedroom-ceiling had not just four corners but many corners—hundreds, and perhaps thousands; it was like one of those ancient grand Persian mirrored halls with complicated diamond-like muqarnas (beehive-like architectural corbels), fitted with thousands of cut mirrors in an amazing and complex array of geometrical and mathematical impossibility. I could see myself, yet it was not me, looking back at the endless other selves ad infinitum in loops, turns, and twists of the transparent and multilayered gossamer of glowing crystal walls that were laughing, breathing, dancing, and pulsating with exuberance and grace.

Unexpectedly, the wonder and amazement gave way to an overwhelming joy and profound sadness cohabiting in this phantasmagoria. An unbearable longing and yearning for some unknown place or nameless thing filled the vision and aspect of me that was experiencing and perceiving this, yet on another level it was beyond my slice of capacity to contain it. I must confess that the use of the words "I" and "me" is simply a linguistic ploy to narrate the experience; the "I" that I associate with in my everyday life was not there. Abruptly, the vision of the supranatural room ended. The glowing light came very close and moved up and down over my chest as if inspecting me and then abruptly moved up and shot out through the closed

window.

Once again, the mundane bedroom with the early dawn light and the sound of birds superimposed themselves on my consciousness. My lungs sucked in air like a newborn baby. I had to literally turn my head and bury it in the pillow so that my gasping did not awaken my sleeping family. I was uncontrollably convulsing, and had not noticed that I had stopped breathing during this dream event.

Gradually the enigmatic melancholia and bewilderment gave way to a feeling of calm exuberance, deep gratitude, and a very strange compassion for all things. I felt a deep love for everyone and everything in the bedroom and beyond its limiting walls, for all of the sleeping neighbors and creatures out there, including those who had hurt my family and me. There was an intensity and sharpness to being alive and very present to the moment. There were no thoughts in my mind, and when they did try to form, they were like imagined shapes in the clouds that would melt, become amorphous, and disappear into the teeming void.

In hindsight, I could see that my practices had prepared me for this journey and had opened the gates to rare insights. They had primed me to see those insights with less fear and projection. Somehow, the accumulated practices had caused a shift in my perspective and had opened a new channel of understanding for these unfamiliar territories of my mindscape. Even so, I was profoundly baffled by how stable and real this lucid dream/vision was, and by how the boundaries had blurred between what I considered me and my reality and some transcendent state that had its own volition and somehow could see itself through my ordinary eyes.

It is of significance to mention some incidence of consequence that Jung might have called synchronicity, but I prefer to call it “the signature,” since I have seen it happen again and again after some of these astonishing dreams and certain physical phenomena. It is as if the phenomenon has the intention to put its seal or signature on the situation as an indication and a sign not to be doubted or denied away. Within a day or two, through a series of events and happenstance, I came across a passage in the work of Ibn al-Arabi, who describes the relationship of God to his creatures as reflections in endless mirrors.

Satan, the Ardent Lover of God

During the formative centuries of Islamic civilization, Persian scientists, scholars, and mystics were substantially responsible for developing many fields of knowledge. Sufism was no exception to this trend. Iranians had

systematically sorted and documented Arabic grammar, and they continued developing exquisite forms of script and calligraphy for their new sacred text and common tongue of the Muslim world.

Some mystic masters, such as Suhrawardi, utilized Persian, Arabic, and other languages to map the invisible terra incognita. Many Sufi terminologies had Arabic derivations, particularly from those found in the Quran. As with any language-borrowing process, shape shifting during assimilation resulted in a cornucopia of varying meanings, amplitudes, and connotations. One such term is *Alam al mithal* (Arabic), signifying the archetypal and pleromatic dimensions. Henry Corbin, the great student and scholar of Iranian mysticism, translated this term as "Imaginal World."[2] This phrase may be misleading to the inexperienced person, who may associate the word "imaginal" with that which is created out of our imagination and, therefore, lacks reality or substance. As Rumi stated, each building was once an image in the mind of its architect. Both propositions are true—creation out of our imagination and the reality of this Imaginal World. We have to come to terms with these paradoxes, because without understanding and accepting paradoxes it will be difficult to grasp the complexity and awe-inspiring wonderment of these strange universes, which in their essence are one unified whole. Paraphrasing Ibn Arabi, envisioning God requires two eyes: the eye of reason and the eye of imagination.

My perception of this Imaginal World depended not only on my training and the slant it took, but also on the level of my comprehension, life experiences and cultural biases, and perhaps other inherent capacities and limitations. Psychological and physical challenges can also shape perceptions. For example, a congenitally blind person does not dream in imagery, yet this may change if the individual develops the organ of perception. People who take sedatives, psychedelics, analgesics, and other drugs will experience very different dream imagery, depending on the analeptic quality of those substances. The seeker's physical state and clarity of mind are critically important in shaping the appearance and creation of the dream as well as grasping the symbolic content of it. Our attention is fixed in the dimension of time and space. This limitation, by its very nature, creates dichotomy and blocks our view of the totality. There is no darkness, just a dim vision on our part. As with a coin, we cannot see both sides simultaneously, but we know the other side exists: both sides depend on each other to create the whole. The whole in the dream is like an anamorphic

image; it needs a proper perspective to reveal itself.

Years ago, I shared an insight on the archetypal nature of the 99 names of Allah. My scholar colleagues immediately rejected the idea. I knew that their minds were closed by their fixed ideas. Some decades later, a Muslim artist started a cartoon series based on the very same concept. Artists tap into the archetypal sources intuitively, and that is why the rest of us respond to their work, for we also intuitively recognize the energies behind the characters presented in stories, myth, poetry, comic books, theater, and movies.

It is gratifying to see that scientists, psychiatrists, philosophers, writers, and researchers, inspired by the activities of the mystics and shamans and by their own experiences with hallucinogenic substances and meditation, have ventured into explorations of human consciousness and have attempted to present their understanding of this subject through the language of their own field. William James, Aldous Huxley, Huston Smith, Ken Wilber, David Bohm, Fred Alan Wolf, Rupert Sheldrake, Albert Hoffman, John Lily, Stan Grof, Michael Persinger, and hundreds of others have attempted to explore the invisible frontiers between our ears and locate the cosmic code.

What is a bit disconcerting is that even when our skepticism concerning dream states and mystical experiences has been satisfied and their veracity proven, we still go on as if all was just another mysterious anomaly. I recall a time in the early 1970s when Dr. Elmer Green of the Menninger Clinic invited Swami Rama to participate in experiments at the clinic. Through the practice of yoga nidra (a form of dream yoga), Swami could maintain full consciousness in deep states of dream and sleep, including delta-wave sleep. The scientist was astonished and baffled because, while Swami's body was in deep sleep according to all the scientific monitoring, he was fully aware of everything going on in the lab.

For centuries, Sufis have been using their dreams (*roya*, Persian) for oracular purposes and as a vehicle to explore the Imaginal Realms (*Hurqalya*, unknown[3]). They may also employ their dreams as a gauge, to track their progress toward the various stations of the spiritual path. The 16th-century Sufi al-Sharani's practice of monitoring his dreams for this purpose was almost obsessional. Ibn Sirin had said that only God knows the limits of human imagination, and he suggests that dream interpreters should understand their own nature, perceptions, and intentions, and recognize these qualities. It appears that he must have understood the nature of what we call

projection and transference. On this point, the story of Abraham's dream and the instruction to sacrifice his son, Isaac, is an example of a heart that lacks clarity and a mind that is confused by literalism. For Sufis, God is not out to constantly test our resolve, demand blind faith, and compel strict loyalty. Instead, it is up to us to open ourselves to the larger possibilities of ourselves and rediscover our unvarnished Self. What Sufis see in the story of Abraham and Isaac is a call to let go of our precious attachments and sacrifice our duality-vision.

Similarly, in the story of the fall of Satan (*Shaitan/Iblis*), what Sufis see is not the disobedience of Satan, but rather the unwavering love of Satan for God and only God, and his willingness to suffer damnation (eternal separation from his beloved) rather than suffer acceptance of duality and worshiping at the altar of God's creation rather than God alone. I see parallels in the story of Judas and his betrayal of Jesus. For the drama to unfold, someone must make the supreme sacrifice and be the "fall guy." Without the villain, there is no hero to be worshipped. The antagonist makes as much of a sacrifice as the protagonist for the story to unfold. On some level, the hero figure gets off easily because he has our love and adulation, while the villain must suffer for eternity for being the scapegoat and helping the cosmic plot to move on. I was pleased to read that there was a discovery of a gospel, presumably by Judas, that tells a story very similar to the deduction I had drawn from reading the Biblical version of the story.

Sufis do not care what others may think of them, as long as they are true to their own path, and they do not mind getting the blame. In fact, some orders called Blameworthy (*Malamati*, Arabic) go out of their way to receive blame of any kind, just to make sure their egos will not get the better of them. At a very young age, I had an encounter with a hideous-looking beggar, whom decades later I discovered was a dervish, not begging as a holy mendicant but disguised as a loathsome creature to be shunned. Sufis may display strange behaviors, movements, sounds, and other antics as part of their training. Due to the mental and physical practices they must undertake, it is not unusual to find them earning their livelihood by disguising themselves as performers in carnivals, circuses, and amusement shows.

What I find different and psychologically powerful, especially for emotionally injured and alienated seekers (which means most people on the planet), is the basic tenet of Sufism, which is that the heart must be opened and turned away from all else except the beloved. Judgment, disdain, wrath,

envy, dwelling on failure, frustrations, fear, self-pity, and everything else that could occupy the heart and mind are mere distractions. The wayfarer forgives all, surrenders to the divine wisdom and plunges himself into his ardent love, and is grateful for whatever may come. This focus and passion, combined with the techniques of body movement, breath, remembrance (*dhikr*, Arabic), channeling of energy, and other practices of meditation (*muraghaba*, Arabic; meaning "alertness or watchfulness"), become the most powerful tools to defy somnolence, forgetfulness, and succumbing to the bewildering sounds and images that are bound to arise, and most importantly help to expand the horizons of the seekers and allow them to deal with whatever life may throw at them. This practice becomes even more intense and fruitful when it is carried into the different stages of dream states. Purifications, clarity, focus, and intentions are the wings that will carry the dreamer through. If lucky, in time, one will enter consciously into the Imaginal Realm and will experience firsthand the pleroma of emanations and divine grace.

Notes

1. John Lamoreaux, *The Early Muslim Tradition of Dream Interpretation* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002).
2. Henri Corbin, "The Visionary Dream in Islamic Spirituality," in *The Dream and Human Societies* ed. G.W. von Grunebaum and Roger Callois (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1966), 381–408.
3. The origin of this word is in dispute. Suggestions range from Mandaean, to Greek, to Hebrew and others. Moreover, it has been used interchangeably with *Alam al-Mithal* and *Barzakh*.

9

Pathogenic Dream Lucidity? A Warning from Native North America

Shayne A. P. Dahl

Introduction

I offer this chapter as an anecdotal and clinical warning to those interested in "exploring the world of lucid dreaming."[1] It is intended as a counterbalance to the romanticism of lucid dreaming in pop psychology—notions, for instance, that dreamscapes are playful sanctuaries for lucid dreamers, where one can pursue various fantasies, explore and develop one's inner, Jungian self, or enhance metacognition in a Buddhist framework.[2] While I welcome these popular interpretations and applications of lucid dreaming as earnest contributions to the field, the ethnographic record tells a different and far less pleasant story about the potentialities of metacognition in the dream state. Far from the fantastic adventures and spiritual awakenings in Western models of lucid dreaming, ethnographic informants from many non-Western "dream cultures"—societies that place high value on dreams—share accounts that warn against the improper cultivation and use of dream lucidity, suggesting it can rouse psycho-spiritual dangers such as accelerating the vulnerable into psychosis and, worse yet, instigating dream death.[3]

The warning presented in this chapter echoes those I was given when I set foot on the Blood Indian Reserve in southwestern Alberta, Canada, in the summer of 2011 to inquire if and how dream lucidity is used as a shamanistic technique. I have conducted intermittent research with a Blackfoot community there since 2004 and was uniquely poised to inquire about this enigmatic and esoteric aspect of shamanistic practice. When I arrived and throughout my stay, my informants were very generous in sharing their knowledge of dreaming with me. Although they did not differentiate lucid

from nonlucid dreams per se, they clearly exercise metacognition, or "the awareness, understanding, and control of one's own cognitive processes," during powerful dreams involving spirit encounters. In addition to learning how dream lucidity enables medicine men to interact with benign spirits directly, I learned that in their view the dream world is also host to bad spirits who, like pathogens, seek out and thrive on the life-force of the vulnerable. As such, anyone hoping to meet with benign spirits and build a mutually beneficial relationship with them needs strong spiritual protection to guard against bad, life-force–devouring spirits. Such protection can take decades, arguably a lifetime, of practice to cultivate. Those without it are subject to all of the harmful potential that bad spirits thrust onto the unprotected, including insanity, illness, and severe misfortune as well as death of oneself and/or one's loved ones.

I have organized this chapter into two sections. The first discusses lucidity in the Native North American vision quest, a dream-vision incubation rite that has been of long-term interest in anthropology. Drawing on the ethnographic record and excerpts from interviews with some informants on the Blood Indian Reserve, I argue that lucidity in dreams and waking visions is cultivated to discern between benign and malign spirits during a vision quest and to negotiate with them. I also emphasize the psycho-spiritual dangers of performing the rite. In the second section, I consider my informants' warnings in relation to dream death and its closest medical correlate, sudden unexplained nocturnal death syndrome (SUNDS). I argue that since many societies wholeheartedly believe in the spiritual reality of their dreams, dream experiences of lethal assault can and do lead to the death of the physical body. While rarely seen in the mainstream West, such a fate is more common in the world than we tend to think. Admittedly, it takes a leap of faith to connect dying in a dream to SUNDS; however, sleep scholars have made clear connections between sudden death while sleeping and culturally encoded forms of sleep paralysis.[4] With an awareness of the potential insanity, illness, and sudden death that is said to emerge from the improper cultivation of dream lucidity, aspiring lucid dreamers are urged to question their motives before setting forth into a world that is as majestic and mysterious as that of waking life, but has the potential to be equally as pathogenic and lethal.

Pathogenic Dream Lucidity and the Vision Quest of the Great Plains

The most intense Native North American dream incubation ritual on record is the "vision quest" of the Great Plains.[5] It is typically described as a four-night solitary retreat into the wilderness taken by young men and some women. It varies in form and intent throughout the Great Plains but similar dream incubation rites are found throughout the continent. (See Robin Ridington's chapter in this volume for accounts of lucid dreaming and vision questing practiced by the Dane-zaa of British Columbia). In most cases, vision seekers go alone, but sometimes they may venture out in groups scattered individually in a sanctified area. Once they set up their site with the proper arrangement of sacred items, they perform *auto-sacrifice*, a sacrifice that offers degrees of one's own life-force through fasting from food, water, social interaction, and sleep. Once appropriately prepared, seekers "lament for a vision" through prayer, song, and the ritualistic smoking of tobacco until they either achieve the sought-after vision, retire from their site unsuccessfully, or flee out of fright.[6] This vision can come during the waking state, trance, or sleep, including during a lucid dream. To achieve an authentic gift from a spirit or a monotheistic/pantheistic Creator, one has to be willing to endure the suffering of the ascetic rite. An authentic gift may come in the form of a song with healing power, instructions for how to assemble a sacred item such as a pipe or clothing, and ethical proscriptions and prescriptions that the seeker must follow lest she lose the power bestowed and suffer the consequences of disrespecting the gift.[7]

I interpret the reciprocal exchange underlying the auto-sacrifice of the vision quest as one of life-force. The seeker offers his or her life-force through ascetic auto-sacrifice; the spirit then reciprocates by providing sacred knowledge that both possesses life-force and has the power to transmit life-force in the case of spiritual doctoring. The "transfer of power" constituting the vision begins a long-term relationship between a seeker and the spirit that is renewed through ceremony, prayer, song, and the honoring of any ethical prescriptions or proscriptions that constitute the gift given.[8]

A medicine man informant of mine on the Blood Indian Reserve who has gone on a number of vision quests throughout his life, hereafter referred to

with the pseudonym of "Rodney," told me that spirits may come every night, some nights, once, or not at all during a vision quest. He then shared an anecdote that highlights the indispensability of metacognition in the dream-vision state during a vision quest. Rodney claimed that in the case where spirits visit nightly, the spirits that visit on the first three nights are, more often than not, bad spirits. That is to say, they originate from the negative side of the spirit world and appear to the seeker prematurely. They do not require much auto-sacrifice, suffering, or life-force upon their arrival because they will claim it later, often at the expense of the seeker and his or her family. When bad spirits appear during the vision quest, they are conniving and tempt the seeker to accept a veiled, pathogenic gift that will eventually lead to great misfortune in the form of insanity or the illness or death of oneself or family members. Good spirits, in contrast, require big auto-sacrifices for authentic gifts. The metacognitive ability to discern between ill-intentioned spirits and authentic spirits is, therefore, essential to a successful vision quest.

Rodney explained the danger of bad spirits in dreams and during the vision to me and the importance of being able to discern them in the following interview segment:

> SD: In a dream, can somebody attack you?
>
> R: Oh yeah! The negative side, the dark side is very powerful. That's why I always say people really have to understand what we do, especially when you go out on a vision quest. They [spirits] play with your mind. They're going to play with your mind out there. A teacher that thinks, that *knows* that you're ready to go out for that spiritual quest . . . He's going to teach you how to identify the good and the bad.

Another informant, referred to as "John," has shared a number of his vision quest encounters with bad spirits. In one of them, he is accosted four times by a temptress spirit who offers him the power to have any woman he wants.[9] In describing his state of consciousness at the time, he said, "While I was sleeping, I thought I was awake." Later he added, "When they [spirits] start going to you, I think they put you to sleep. But you, you think you're still awake, hey. Your spirit . . . your spirit is still sitting, awake. Your body . . . fell over and . . . yeah, that's how it is." I interpret this wakefulness during his dreams as lucidity.

John has also described a group vision quest he led where he encountered a spirit that tried to trick him into leaving everyone behind. Metacognition

helped him to resist the tricks of the imposter:

> J: I was the one that was supposed to take care of them [other questers] because I had been up there [to the vision quest site] so many times [but] I [accidentally] laid down [to sleep]. Next thing, [Rodney] was calling [from his spot]. I said, "What's wrong?" He said, "My stomach! My stomach! Gosh! Let's just go down and finish our lodge [a sweat lodge ceremony that concludes the vision quest]." I told him, "If you and the other guy want to go down, I have to stay. I already set up my [vision quest spot] . . . we can't go down at this time of the night." All this time . . . *I didn't think it was [Rodney] that was talking to me.* I told him [the voice speaking], "Just go to sleep, I'll stay up, I'm going to stay up." Next thing, he [appeared as a] black [figure] but in the shape of [Rodney]. And his voice: "Well, I think I'd better go down. Would you lend me your vehicle and I'll just come back and get you guys." Sunday, we were supposed to quit. He almost tricked me! It was a bad spirit. While he was talking, he just turned around and started going away and I heard [the real Rodney say], "I'm okay!" "Oh," I said, "[Rodney], how do you feel?" He said, "I'm okay." That wasn't even [Rodney], that guy. You've got to watch that! They'll try and trick you, especially if you went with somebody. [Emphasis added]

Being able to discern between the good and the bad spirits and exercising good judgment with respect to how best to deal with them and their tactics requires metacognitive awareness not only of the situation at hand, but also of consciously recalled preparatory strategies. Regarding preparing for a vision quest, Rodney explained, "We . . . can prepare a lifetime to seek for something like this." John's wife explained:

> You're always preparing yourself every day. That's why the [spirits] tell us: "Prepare yourself every day because you don't know what's going to happen tomorrow, anytime, or today. Anything can happen. Your spirit has to be prepared all of the time—if anything happens, the spirit goes to a good place. If you're not prepared, the spirit goes someplace else."

As with death, preparation for the vision quest accounts for the entire course of one's life. By "preparedness," I interpret my informants' counsel to mean living one's life more or less in accordance with traditional ethos—for instance, regularly attending ceremonies and being brave, kind, generous, reciprocal, and community-centered. The cornerstone of such an ethos is the acknowledgment of one's interdependence on the sociocosmic universe.[10] In Blackfoot ethics, this is enacted through building, maintaining, and renewing reciprocal relationships with human and nonhuman others. Living by this ethic, one invites good spirits and good luck to oneself and family. To the contrary, breaches of this ethic are invitations to bad spirits and entail dire consequences. Focusing on the high value of reciprocity among the Blackfoot, Kenneth Hayes Lokensgard writes, "relationships must be

reciprocal. If not, instead of enjoying the powerful aid of those other [spiritual or other-than-human] beings, the Blackfoot peoples will suffer the negative consequences of being deprived of help or actively punished."[11]

To be prepared for a vision quest, then, is like being prepared for death insofar as preparation amounts to the lifetime practice of good ethics. When nonreciprocating and, therefore, immoral and unprepared persons set out on a vision quest for a novel experience, they are, from a Blackfoot perspective, setting themselves up for tragedy because their lifestyle and intent will attract bad spirits. Furthermore, without proper metacognitive skills, unprepared seekers will lack the power to discern between good and bad spirits, leaving themselves all the more vulnerable to the latter. Even if they have cultivated strong dream lucidity in a Western context, they are, my informants would likely assert, woefully unprepared to protect themselves against the negative side of the spirit world if they have not been living by a specifically Blackfoot ethos. It is only by adhering to the Blackfoot ethos that one accumulates the spiritual protections that come with full dedication to ceremonial life (e.g., bundles, pipes, rattles, drums, moccasins, medicine bags).

Through their training, medicine men have learned how to coerce benign spirits for the benefit of their communities and resist the negative forces, for themselves as well as for ceremonial attendees. Those who are unprepared may, according to my informants, lose their life or at least their sanity if they attempt to make a bond with a spirit during a vision quest. They also put their friends and families at risk of retaliation from the negative side of the spirit world. I have heard a number of times certain stories about young *Naapiikoaiksi* (white men) who pleaded to Rodney's teacher, Brian (pseudonym), to go on a vision quest while Rodney was undertaking his apprenticeship. It did not turn out well for either *napikwan*:

> R: A lot of people, the non-Natives, especially over here in the States . . . a lot of people are not there for the right purposes. Like this white guy that wanted to fast [on a vision quest]. [Brian] kept telling him, "No. It's not for you." But he insisted in going out. Finally [Brian] said, "Well, [what should I do]?" I told him, "Show him." [Brian] told him, "Okay. You want it? I'll bring you there." [Brian] brought him out. I don't know what they [spirits] did to him out there. That night he came into the sweat. He couldn't believe what he experienced. [Brian] told him, "That's why I didn't want you to go. They could have killed you!" Another guy in Sweet Grass Hills [Montana]; they [the spirits] moved him from this spot to a different spot . . . His mind was all messed up. [Brian] had to doctor him up there in the mountain. Just enough time to get him back to the sweat. By the time he was in the sweat, he was like a zombie. His eyes were just in one spot.

SD: What did he want from it?

R: It was probably just to find out if it was for real, what we were doing.

SD: Just for a selfish reason, then.

R: The [spirits] messed up his mind. He didn't even know who he was when he got into the sweat. [Brian] was like, "Who are you?" He was like . . . [blank stare]. That's how he was. [Brian] told him: "That is why it's not meant for you. Sure, you can be somebody in the sweat, in the group fast; for your own well-being. But to go out into the wilderness like the way we [medicine men] do it; you may not come back [alive]. Maybe that would be the last day . . . you'll ever be on Earth. That's how dangerous it is. But the [spirits] pity us by showing us that they do exist. That, they are powerful." It took a hell of a lot [of doctoring] for [Brian] and me to take care of this guy. And I mean it almost knocked the daylights out of us. They had to drag me out of the sweat; that's how bad it was. And [Brian] told that guy: "I never want you to mention it . . . I just wanted to show you because you didn't believe what we told you, okay. But my son [Rodney] was the one who had to pay for it. Look at him." You know, they dragged me out of the sweat and that was rough, that was really, really rough. Ever since then, that guy didn't want anything to do with us.

Similar accounts are found in the ethnographic record. Exploring the vision quest among the Shoshoni, Åke Hultkrantz tells of vision quest sites that have been abandoned because of the psycho-spiritual harm the spirits in the region have instigated even for the well-prepared, causing seekers to go blind, become lame, lose their minds, and die within years of receiving the medicine there.[12] All of these accounts highlight the psycho-spiritual dangers of the vision quest and indirectly suggest that lucid dreaming may not be as safe as romantic pop psychology would have us believe.

The Risk and Reality of (Lucid) Dream Death and Psychosis

Medical anthropologist Shelley R. Adler has explored fatal accounts of sleep paralysis in cross-cultural contexts, with particular focus on Laotian Hmong refugees who have recently immigrated to the United States.[13] Sleep paralysis is an anomalous condition occurring when a person is aroused into wakefulness, but his brain remains in a rapid eye movement (REM) dream mode. Feeling awake and alert, a person experiencing sleep paralysis is paralyzed by atonia, a function of the brain that prevents people from acting out their dreams.[14] Because the brain is essentially dreaming while awake, sleep-paralyzed persons can perceive their immediate environment, but their

perception is clouded by culturally encoded hallucinations. The inability to move while perceiving hallucinations, often of otherworldly beings near one's bedside or pressing down on one's chest, can cause sheer terror.[15] Relatedly, Susan Clancy has convincingly argued that alien abduction experiences are actually sleep paralysis experiences encoded in hallucinatory narratives of space-age America.[16]

In a cross-cultural survey, Adler shows how sleep paralysis is imagined and experienced differently by people of different cultures. In 18th-century Europe, for instance, it was imagined as a "nightmare"—a demon-like character that appears in the night and paralyzes a person while sitting on his or her chest.[17] The sensation of being crushed during sleep paralysis is common across cultures and instills fear in experiencers as they often feel as though they cannot breathe.

In her own research, Adler found an abnormal frequency of SUNDS cases among Hmong refugees in the United States. She realized that the Hmong believe very strongly in an evil spirit called *dab tsog* that appears in the night and crushes the breath out of a person. The third time the *dab tsog* appears, the Hmong widely believe, it will kill. Furthermore, the Hmong Lao have a genetic predisposition for Brugada syndrome, a rare and genetically inherited type of cardiac arrhythmia. Approximately 15 to 30 percent of people with Brugada syndrome have a genetic mutation of the disease that leads to sudden cardiac arrest, typically while sleeping.[18] Adler's argument is that the Hmong belief in the fatal potential of the *dab tsog* can cause such anxiety during the experience that it can catalyze a panic-induced heart attack during sleep paralysis. Therefore, SUNDS among the Hmong Lao, she asserts, is a biocultural phenomenon where sleep paralysis encounters with *dab tsog* and a genetic predisposition for Brugada syndrome converge in the psychosomatic death of individuals, in part, through the *nocebo effect*—a negative psycho-physiological response to a negative expectation.

Adler writes, "Because expectations are largely learned from the cultural environment, nocebo effects are thus likely to vary from place to place" and, I would add, in degree of intensity.[19] The nocebo effect can range from mild (a headache) to severe (psychosomatic death).[20] In the case of the Hmong, SUNDS was, Adler argues, inflicted by belief in the lethal potential of the *dab tsog* combined with genetic predisposition to Brugada syndrome. Although Adler's inclusion of Brugada syndrome is a crux of her explanation

for the high incidence of SUNDS among the Hmong, psychosomatic death is far from exclusive to them. Specifically, it has also been been observed in Haitian voodoo traditions and Australian Aboriginal tribes and is likely widespread.[21]

Louis Bird, an oral historian of the *Omushkego* Cree near James Bay, explained that shamans (known in the singular as *mitew*) would often engage in spirit battles in which they would create beasts in their visionary consciousness or while dreaming and attack another *mitew*, who would then protect himself with his own beast. "Only the beasts fight," Bird explains, "the two men just sit there with their minds fighting and whoever is stronger is the winner. And if one of the beasts is killed, the *mitew* dies instantly."[22] *Omushkego* shamans were also considered able to enter other people's dreams to attack them. "Whoever was killed in that dream," Bird writes, "didn't wake up again." My informants also told me that you can die in your dream if you are not careful and get in over your head—for instance, like the white vision questers. Whether a *mitew* imagines he is being attacked or is actually being attacked, the absolute belief in the fatal consequences of the encounter may, as Adler has shown, result in death.

Similar anecdotes of shamanistic lucid dream assaults resulting in psychosomatic illness and death are found among the Chepang of south and central Nepal as well as among the Jahai and Batek groups of Peninsular Malaysia (see Diana Riboli's chapter in this volume). George Devereux documented anecdotes from the Mohave of the American Southwest that explicitly link dreaming with the acquisition of illness.[23] Among the Mohave, "harmful adventures of the soul" while dreaming, such as "the invasion of the psyche by an alien power," are strongly equated with the onset of illness. Devereux refers to such dreams as "pathogenic dreams," which inspired the title of this chapter.

It is important to note here that the opposite of the harmful nocebo effect and its extreme end, psychosomatic death, is the *placebo effect*—when a positive expectation elicits a positive psycho-physiological response. The most popular example of the placebo effect is doctors healing patients by giving them sugar pills rather than pills with medicinal properties. Greenfield and Winkelman argue that symbolic notions of self, other, soul, spirits, and similar concepts directly correlate to neural structures and functions of the brain.[24] As such, behavioral manipulations of symbols in ritual (through

music, dance, and other ceremonies) and vivid, emotionally charged interactions with symbolic figures (supernatural agents) in dreams affect neurological processes. Since the immune system is responsive to neurological processes while awake or dreaming, psycho-emotional engagements with symbols affect our immune system to our harm or benefit.[25] Shamanistic ritual and altered states of consciousness are, according to Winkelman, powerfully affective means by which humans have cultivated and continue to tacitly mediate the placebo effect.[26] They are adaptive mechanisms because they unite social groups and evoke self-healing processes through the manipulation of symbols. What Winkelman and Greenfield have not considered in depth, however, are the detrimental effects of nocebos through negative manipulations of, or dream encounters with, powerful symbols.

While it may be next to impossible to find a direct link between SUNDS and pathogenic dreaming (because those who die from a nightmare will never wake to tell us what happened), the nocebo effect is a real and dangerous phenomenon. Through the negative manipulation or encounters with cultural symbols, the nocebo effect is pathogenic and potentially lethal. Although sleep paralysis is not the same as lucid dreaming, they have several formal properties in common besides both being REM phenomena, including high levels of metacognition, visionary imagery, and powerful emotional states. While anthropologists have only anecdotes from informants to connect illness and psychosomatic death with lucid dreams, it stands to reason that the higher emotive intensity of lucid dreams would have a more powerful placebo/nocebo impact than normal, semi-conscious dreams. Green and McCreery do remark on the emotional intensity of lucid dreaming but, like most other pop psychologists, they focus on the mystical elation of discerning the dream state while dreaming, rather than on the panic-stricken terror that can ensue, for instance, during the assault of a powerful spirit, or the lasting impact that the memory of the assault can have.[27] Believing one has been the victim of a spiritual assault upon awakening can prolong the nocebo effect indefinitely. Green and McCreery also dismiss claims that lucid dreaming may have "possible detrimental effects" by citing the romantic accounts of lucid dreaming that Stephen LaBerge has put forth.[28] These accounts of lucid dreaming as harmless are inaccurate and promote novel experimentation without consideration for the fact that lucidity is experienced differently by

different people in diverse societies.[29] It is not universally safe and should not be universally recommended.

The case of Jared Loughner, a convicted gunman who killed six people and injured 13 others in Tucson, Arizona, in January 2012 clarifies this point precisely.[30] According to news reports, drug use and experimentation with lucid dreaming accelerated Loughner's paranoid schizophrenia, for which he did not seek or receive medical attention. This led him to an assassination attempt of U.S. Representative Gabrielle Giffords, who, his dream diaries report, Loughner dreamed about somewhat frequently before the day of the shooting. He is reported to have contacted dream researcher Ryan Hurd about lucid dreaming 18 months prior to the shooting, and his dream journals reveal lucid dream accounts of him gunning many people down without hesitation because he knew they were not real.[31] While I do not assert that lucid dreaming caused Jared Loughner to embark on a shooting rampage, clearly lucid dreaming can reverberate with adverse effects in society.

Although it takes mental stability to develop lucidity as it is modeled in a Western context, I would assert that it takes even more mental stability and preparedness to venture into the (lucid) dream practices of societies other than one's own, such as the visionary traditions of the Great Plains. I hope my chapter contributes to this volume by highlighting the unexpected and pathogenic dangers of dream lucidity in non-Western societies. Readers who sought this text as a go-to guide for how to dream like the Blackfoot, the Chepang of south and central Nepal, the Jahai and Batek groups of Peninsular Malaysia, the Hmong Lao, and so on should reconsider.

Conclusion

When I was first warned against researching too deeply into the use of volitional dreaming in Blackfoot shamanistic practice, I was admittedly skeptical. At the time, I held the view that many Western dream romantics do —namely, that dreams are relatively harmless. As affective and terrifying as a severe nightmare can be, it is often cured, I thought, by the simple buzz of an alarm clock. I have come to learn that this is a naïvely dangerous point of view to harbor, especially when hoping to develop one's lucid dreaming ability. After referring readers to a list of works that will aid them to cultivate

dream lucidity for research purposes, Laughlin concludes his exhaustive treatise on the anthropology of dreaming with a warning that "some of these sources may take you deeper into a confrontation with the unconscious than you may wish to go."[32] Highlighting the importance of mental stability, he adds, "Remember, Jungian dream-work is usually applicable to people *after* they reach their mid-life."[33]

Laughlin's warning, along with those from my informants, begs the question: is dreaming dangerous only if your culture harbors a pathogenic dream theory—that dreams can and do cause harm—or is dreaming dangerous in general? Furthermore, could introducing the nocebo danger of pathogenic dreaming as I, Riboli, and Adler have done actually cause more issues for dreamers who read our works by inserting fear and anxiety into their dreaming practices? Although this point is debatable, I would contend that dreaming, especially at an advanced level, is a hazardous activity in general when engaged in without community support and formal training, and that it can amplify preexisting mental instability and, as Adler has argued, harmful genetic predispositions. Whether it is the dreams that pose a threat or the nocebo effect they have in devoted dreamers, lucid dreaming is not as safe and mystical as we have been led to believe, at least not for everyone.

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10

They Dream about Everything: The Last Dreamers of the Dane-zaa

Robin Ridington

In the Beaver Indian language, Dane-zaa means “real people” or “our people.” I have been fortunate to work as an ethnographer with the Dane-zaa (also known as Beaver Indians) since the 1960s. The Dane-zaa communities north of the Peace River in British Columbia have been lucky enough to escape the scourge of residential schools, which stole much of the language and culture from many of their neighbors. Until the 1980s, Beaver was spoken in the home by people of all ages, but as children began to attend integrated public schools and were exposed to television and the Internet, use of the Beaver language has declined.

During my first years of fieldwork, I was drawn to the elders, most of whom were born in the 19th century. I brought an Uher reel-to-reel portable tape recorder with me and collaborated with many of the elders to record their stories and songs. Outstanding among these was a man named Charlie Yahey, who was the latest, and perhaps the last, in a long line of Dane-zaa prophets known as *Naachiin* or Dreamers. As we gradually got to know and trust each other, Charlie decided that in addition to teaching younger people to be songkeepers, it would be important to record his teachings for future generations. He began one of our recording sessions by saying:

> I am the last Dreamer. I am the last one left here. This man [Robin] is recording my voice. The world will listen to my voice. That is all. That is the way things are.

He later told me:

> Just like this kind of tape recording, you can hear the song. That is how they grab it. They wake up with that song. When they wake up in the morning, they won’t lose it. They just sing the song that way—how it turns and other people who come in there will sing with it. From there that is how come there are lots of songs all over. Some other guys will come and straighten up

that song. They will come in and sing it after the Dreamer and from there make a dance.[1]

As I listened to Charlie's stories and those of other elders of his generation, I heard over and over the names of Dreamers who had gone before Charlie Yahey. Some I had missed by only a few years, others perhaps by centuries. Their names often described the visionary experiences that initiated them into dreaming. One Dreamer, who signed Treaty Eight in 1900, was named *Atisklise*. The name originally meant "birch bark," but its meaning has expanded to include paper. The elders told me that Atisklise was like a mailman; he used his dreaming to visit relatives who had passed away and bring back messages from them. Another Dreamer was named *Aledze* ("gunpowder"), because his dreams took him from one place to another with the speed of a bullet. Another was called *Aske Kwolan* ("Boy Old Man"), because his vision combined the vigor of youth and the wisdom of an elder.

The elders also told me about *Makenunatane*, the first prophet, whom they said had predicted the coming of the white men. This would have placed his prophesy sometime prior to 1793, the date of Alexander Mackenzie's visit to Dane-zaa territory. Makenunatane's name literally means "His Tracks Earth Trail," but Dane-zaa elder and translator Billy Attachie gave it more symbolically as "On the Trail—The Doorway—He Opens the Door." The name is appropriate, since in addition to predicting the first white people, Makenunatane dreamed about the new ways that the fur trade and Christianity would make necessary. His name suggests that, like the traditional culture hero *Tsaayaa*, who flies from season to season putting leaves on the trees and across the sky from dawn to dusk like the sun, Makenunatane followed the sun's path in his dreams. The Dane-zaa so impressed me with the importance they place on dreaming that I called my first published paper, "Beaver Indian Dreaming and Singing."[2]

A Northwest Company journal for 1799–1800 lists one of the leading men trading into the post as being named "The Cigne" [French for "The Swan"]. Also, Makenunatane's Beaver name was probably *Dabi* ("Swan").[3] Charlie Yahey told me that Dreamers are like swans in their ability to fly from one season to another. Like the swans that fly south in the winter, Dreamers fly to a land beyond the sky and bring back songs for the people on Earth. Dane-zaa songkeeper Tommy Attachie summarized the history of Dane-zaa Dreamers as follows:

Makenunatane [he opens the door], that's the first. He's the first one and he's the first one dream to Heaven. And another one's name, Aledze [gunpowder]. And another one, Maketsueson [he shows the way]. That's the one, big prophet, too. Just like Makenunatane. Maketsueson. And after, Sam Aku's grandpa, that's another prophet. And another prophet, Prophet River, Louis Notseta's dad; his name is Naachan, that one. And another one, Aske Kwolan [boy-old man] from Halfway. He's another prophet. And nineteen-fifty, Oker, Annie Oker's dad. Oker. That's a Dreamer, too, prophet. And last one, Charlie Yahey. And another one name is Atisklise [birch bark paper]. That's another prophet, too. And Gayaan, he's a big prophet. He's from Alberta.

All these Dreamers, not anybody become a prophet. God choose them, certain people. We are all together, we are Beaver Indian, and these, they understand each other. And all these prophets, One time, there's no prophets, you know, then people fighting each other all over. And after the Prophets start to dream to Heaven, from there, Prophets told them, "There's God. There's Creator. There's a land over there, you know. When people die, good people die, and get to Heaven, all these people are over there," they told them. From there, everything stop. All the people, they got their own Prophet and told them. From there, they all stop fighting. They make peace. Today everybody, white people, Native, all sorts together, and some of us, we are Christian, too. All these Prophets, they got different song. Same songs, that's from Heaven, but you know, all sounds different.

The Prophet dreams about when it's really cold. Way before the Prophets it was really cold. Even animals, you know, froze, that much cold. So the Prophets, those two Prophets start, from there really cold, you know. Then they sing a song, pray with that song, and start to get warm up. All winter like that, you know. Then God answer their prayers for everything that's good.

All these animals got their own song, too. All over in this world, all the animals pray to Creator. They dream about that, too. Even them animals, deep snow like that, they can't walk, they starving like that, can't make it, they sing a song and the Prophet sing them song and even animals was singing. Pray to God.

And later on, you know, start to really warm up. All the snow coming down. Then all these animals just go anyplace, find the food. And they dream about everything, what's going to happen over here. That's about maybe more than 60 years, 70, 80 years. They said all these places, you know. We don't know. Us now, we don't know next 10 years, what's going to happen.[4]

Lucid Dreaming

Anthropologist Charles Laughlin views dreaming as an emergent property of evolution. The sleeping brain has a long phylogenetic history and must be highly adaptive. Laughlin suggests that "dreaming arose when sleeping brains evolved, long before the REM [rapid eye movement] type sleep stage emerged. In other words, when the first brains evolved that required the metabolically lethargic down-time for optimal functioning, dreaming arose as a byproduct." He goes on to say, "It would not have taken long (in terms of evolutionary time) for selection to favor complexity of symbolic integration

of dreaming and waking cognition, however primitive."[5] Lucid dreaming, at least if defined as being aware of dreaming while in a dream, would seem to have arisen only with the emergence of reflective consciousness and the ability to recognize oneself as somehow apart from oneself.

Neurobiologically, Laughlin points out, "the ability to conceptualize is a later stage in the evolution of the symbolic process, and a communicative refinement of the capacity to categorize."[6] Our distant ancestors, he continues, "experienced reality in both waking and sleeping life, and they took their experiences at face value."[7] Without a system of communication complex enough to share dreams with one another, lucid dreaming—however you want to define it—could not be possible. A revolution occurred when "individual subjectivities became so complex that their comprehension transcended immediate perceptual reality."[8] Following this revolution or transformation of our hominin ancestors, both language and lucid dreaming could emerge. Laughlin suggests that at some point our ancestors thought, "If I dream of a successful hunt, and my dreams are real, where is the game that I killed?" The answer he gives is that our ancestors must have come to understand their hunting dreams as portents. With the advent of linguistic communication, "dream sharing became commonplace" and dreaming "became part of the mental reality conditioned by hominin culture."[9]

Lucid dreaming must have co-evolved with language among our hominin ancestors. Today, language and the ability to think through dreams are defining features of the human psyche. From this perspective, language and lucid dreaming are points on a continuum of mental capacities that define who we are as humans. Some cultures, however, value language as a more valid way of thinking than dreaming. Western culture and the language of science are predominantly monophasic and, in Laughlin's words, "tend to skew the development of consciousness away from ASC [altered states of consciousness] and toward perceptual and cognitive processes oriented outward to the external world."[10] They privilege information processed in waking consciousness above information processed in dreams and later evaluated through language.

Like many, if not all, First Nations people, the Dane-zaa live in what Laughlin calls a polyphasic culture, "meaning that they value experiences had in the dream-life, as well as those had in trance states, meditation states, drug and ordeal-driven visions, etc."[11] The language and culture of Western

science, in contrast, are monophasic. Anthropologists have the task of bridging these two ways of being. Ethnographic writing speaks in the language of a monophasic culture, but an ethnographer working in a polyphasic culture must also be open to polyphasic experience. While it is true that you cannot record dreams directly any more than you can record experiences directly, the ethnographer must go beyond participant observation to experience what anthropologist Barbara Tedlock calls "observation of participation."[12] As Laughlin suggests, the ethnographer must train himself or herself "to approximate in my own experience what my informants are describing to me."[13]

Lucid dreaming has been described as a dream in which "we are aware within the dream that we are dreaming and that we are not awake." Laughlin, as an ethnographer, points out that this definition is ethnocentric and "assumes a culture in which waking states and dreaming states are distinct, one being associated with awareness and the other not." He notes, "We would hardly expect that kind of distinction to be made by folks brought up in a fully polyphasic culture."[14] As a bridge to understanding the lucid dreaming of another culture, Laughlin suggests that "dreaming is another domain of experiences had by the brain that produces and consumes them, and that hard and fast distinctions between waking and dreaming are not phenomenologically accurate."[15] From what Dane-zaa people have told me about their dream experiences, their phenomenology also does not make such hard and fast distinctions. Dreamers communicate with one another in their dreams and bring back messages from ancestors who have gone before. The dream trail is a trail of song. Dreamers communicate with people in their community through songs "brought back from heaven" and performed in the dance circle that brings people together around a central fire.

Dreaming and the Vision Quest

Naachiin are not the only Dane-zaa who use dreaming to predict the future and understand what is going on in the world around them. Indeed, to the Dane-zaa, dreaming is an essential part of being human. Traditionally, every child was sent on one or more vision quests. The Beaver name for a vision quest is *shin kaa*, meaning "to seek a song." In the vision quest, the child

enters into a phase transformation that combines dreaming and visionary states of consciousness. The Dane-zaa use only one word to describe dreaming, which indicates that they understand all dreaming to be meaningful and accessible to conscious engagement. From that perspective, they seem to consider all dreaming to be potentially lucid.

Dreaming and the vision quest are intensely personal experiences. As an ethnographer, I can record stories and songs, but I cannot record experiences. Working with a polyphasic culture, I must be open to my own experiences by integrating insights obtained through both waking and dreaming. I also must be aware that while I should be open to polyphasic experience, I can never have dreams informed by the full range of Dane-zaa cultural knowledge. I can, and have, dreamed into the Dane-zaa stories I have learned and told to friends and taught to students, but I am not competent to track a moose or even find my way in the bush, let alone be guided through an experience like *shin kaa,* the Dane-zaa vision quest. I know about Dane-zaa dreaming only from what people tell me about their experiences and from what Billy Attachie called "wise stories." Billy Attachie described them as follows:

> It used to be that all the old people would sit together in one place, make some tea, and one person would begin telling a story. Then another would tell one and another, and so on like that. They would keep on telling one after another, sometimes for five or ten days. When they would tell the stories the people would have to behave and just hear the story really well. I listened really well. When the old people died, the younger ones would take all their stories and pass them on. That is why they had to listen and get them just right. Some people didn't behave themselves and would forget everything. That is what all the old timers said. That is how I got these stories.[16]

Around the time of puberty, a young person leaves camp and goes into the bush for his or her *shin kaa*. The elders have sent the young person out, but he or she is not really alone. The youth is closely monitored by them through their own lucid or directed dreaming. By the time a child is ready for *shin kaa*, he or she will have heard and learned a wealth of wise stories. These stories provide guidance for the *shin kaa* experience. As elder May Apsassin put it, "I put these stories in my pocket."[17]

As far as I can interpret what Dane-zaa elders have told me about *shin kaa*, the child goes into the bush and fasts until he enters into an altered state of consciousness that they say is like a dream. In the dream he enters into the story and experiences it directly. The wise stories the child has learned become experientially real. When an animal comes to him in this altered

state, he understands its language and communicates with it directly. In the dream state of the *shin kaa*, the child also experiences an altered sense of time. He experiences what may be only a few days to the outside world as being like an entire season. The vision quest, including the experience that we call lucid dreaming, makes it possible for the youth to have conversations with animal people and mythic beings. The language in which these conversations take place is a language of song—hence the name *shin kaa*, "to seek a song." When the child becomes an adult, this song is a source of power.

This awareness and control through the dream state indicate that the Dane-zaa have a sophisticated knowledge of how dreaming and consciousness can be integrated within a singular experience. Dreams can be used for more than communicating at a distance. If a person dreams that someone is using his or her power to cause harm, he can defend himself or in extreme cases even kill an attacker. Dreamers after Makenunatane warned against malevolent uses of power. They said that a person who kills another with his or her power will take on that person's burdens and become too heavy to ascend *yagatunne*, the trail to heaven. I have never met anyone who claimed to have used power in this way, although it is not uncommon for someone to report fending off an attack during a dream.

Shin kaa empowers a young person to become an adult member of Dane-zaa society. The visionary moment of *shin kaa* seems like a "time out of time" to the children who experience it, but elders are watching over them in their own dreams. They know when it is time to call them back to the world of humans. It is clear from Dane-zaa accounts of *shin kaa* that the elder has learned to follow the child's progress through his or her own lucid dreaming and to tell the child when it is time to return to camp. As a child approaches the place where his relatives are camped, he is cautious and wary, experiencing the sight and smell of camp as something strange, the way an animal would experience it. Sometimes the elders go out and physically lead children back. Sometimes they sing their own songs over them. In 2008, elder May Apsassin told Jillian Ridington about *shin kaa*:

> Their songs, people's songs. They are looking for power. They tell them to look for power from songs. Just over there they send the young kids out. Little kids, without eat, without even touch water, a drink of water. Like that, they send them out. They send them out. They said to them, "You will have songs and power. Go and have songs to be strong." They go there to get it, to find a song, to find their power. They say that.

By saying, “they say that,” May is telling us that her story comes from the elders who have gone before. It is not just her own words, but rather words from others that she is passing on to us. She is talking about dreaming and *shin kaa*, but her words come from the collective experience of her elders, not just her own. Following this introduction, she goes on to talk about her own *shin kaa*:

> See, that’s what my dad tried to do to us. But I don’t know. I get scared sometime. I don’t want to go too far. But after that I remember, and I sleep. I always dream of a bull or a cow. And that time I don’t see cow in Doig [Doig River Reserve]. We never know there’s cows. We just stay in Doig and from there we move to other place and we see farmer, but I don’t know how. I never know cows for a long time. One time we come to Pine, I grow a little bigger, and from there I know there’s a cow. But when I used to live in Doig, I dream of cows. And every time I see cow I just smile, like that, but I never tell nobody. I just keep it to myself and like that, but way after, I remember. That’s why they tell us to do that. And I don’t tell Tommy nothing. And I say, “Let’s go do that. Let’s go up there.” But I never see nothing. No, nothing funny or nothing or anything to do.[18]

May’s story shows that *shin kaa* continued to be a vital part of Dane-zaa culture well into the times when group members were in contact with settlers and domesticated animals. She went on to explain that her father, Charlie Dominic, had power from a white mare. When Jillian and I knew him, he prided himself on riding a beautiful white mare. He was close to his horse, but had to be particularly careful never to eat or drink anything that had a horse’s hair in it.

> And my dad, too, he say he see same thing. Horses take him away for one week. He say, “Big woman,” he call that one mare. “Sure big lady.” Her arm is so big for a lady, and me, I’m just small, and she call me “my child.” She say, “Little kid. They just carry me like that. I got no clothes on. They carry me.” He say, “Before that horse take me down the river here somewhere,” he say, “I went down. I wear moccasins. It’s raining, and all my clothes was sitting there, and just me, they take me like that. And they repeat that. And they say, “It was raining out there. Don’t get wet.” And they just carry me all the way like that, one week. He say, “Someone want you. Your family want you; wonder where you are. We’re going to take you back soon.”[19]

From this story, we learn that there is communication between the animal friend and the elder who sent the child out. The friend and the elder are in dream contact with each other.

The Dane-zaa people know that dreaming is inherently personal, but the form of the experience and even its content are cultural. Because dreaming a

song conveys personal power, the child returning from the bush must not reveal what has happened. To do so would be considered bragging and would anger the animal friend and potentially turn the power into a destructive force. When a young person returns from his *shin kaa*, he or she gradually returns to normal life. *Shin kaa* songs are personal and powerful and not sung in public. Rather, a power song is used only when a family member is ill or suffering some other misfortune. Then, the power holder will sing the song to bring about healing. Sometimes a person dreams that an enemy is using his or her power against him or her. The defense against such an affront is to confront the attacker in a dream and overcome him with one's own power song. Some adults are known for their special healing abilities, but every person who has gone on a *shin kaa* has that power when it is called upon.

In 1999, Billy Attachie told us about certain places where children were sent on their *shin kaa*:

> And there's one at Moig Flat. You know that big one; you ever see that rock? They—long time ago, they all got power from each, each animal, those things. You gotta be really clean, and when you're ready, they take you in the bush and leave you up there. They run. They know you receive it. You get the power from the spiritual power of those animals. And then when the time to come home, your grandpa who sent you over there will meet you and pick you up. But first you got to make fire. Walk you over back and forth on top of that spruce branch fire. And you get back to normal again. And there were no doctor. No hospital. And if Indians sick, they going to die. So whoever got those kind of power, lay hand on them or give them water, or put water on their head. And they recover. They get healed.[20]

The elders told me that while individuals dream ahead for themselves and for those close to them, the Dreamer dreams ahead for everybody. The role of Dreamer is built upon the common experience of vision quest empowerment. People who are not Dreamers more often use their dreams to reach out to the game animals and negotiate a relationship of respect and mutual understanding. For the Dane-zaa, animals are sentient and autonomous beings. They are thought of as animal people. They take it for granted that animal people also dream. To be successful in a hunt, a human person must reach out in his dream and visit the place where his trail and that of a game animal come together.

Both Dreamers and ordinary people can make contact with others in their dreams, but Dreamers seem to have developed this ability into a refined art. Dreamers who are hundreds of miles apart can communicate with one another through their dreams. The Western definition of lucid dreaming as

"being aware of a dream state while in it" does not do justice to the complex phenomenology of Dane-zaa dreaming. Knowing that you are in a dreaming state of consciousness and empowerment seems to be self-evident to the Dane-zaa, in the same way that knowing you are in ordinary waking consciousness is self-evident. What seems most important is the ability to communicate with others and take action through dreaming.

The Dreamers who came after Makenunatane incorporated images from the fur trade as well as from Christianity into the content of their dreaming. The Dreamers who lived before Makenunatane were probably hunt chiefs and prophets who were able to use the powers obtained from their *shin kaa* experiences for the benefit of others. One such early Dreamer was a man named *Dokesachiin*. His name, which comes from his *shin kaa* power, means, "He Slept with Giant Animals." We would probably call Dokesachiin a shaman or prophet. An elder named Aku told me a story about him that certainly took place before the time of first contact in 1793 (Billy Attachie translated). As the story begins, Aku identifies it as an old story, but not one going back to mythic time.

> It's an old story but it's not from way back. These people lived by the mountain. It was towards the springtime when the snow is hard with a crust so you can walk on top. This one old guy, his body was just moving, really uncomfortable (*naagata*). He knew something was going to happen. His body was moving pretty bad. He was shaking all over. Yiche, from way back, Onli Nachi was coming. That elder, he knew about the giant animals.

The feeling of premonition and body trembling are classic examples of shamanic possession and divination. The trembling resonates with the Southern Athapaskan-speaking Navaho diviners and healers known as hand tremblers.

Dokesachiin knew from his *shin kaa* that the giant animal from mythic times was on the trail of his people. He was able to prophesy from his dreams that the giant animal was following his people. The story describes how from early spring through late summer, the feeling of *nagaata* grew until one day Dokesachiin told the people to look back on their trail to see the giant animal catching up with them. According to the story, he was in constant contact with the giant animal through his dreams. It concludes with the giant animal about to attack the people when Dokesachiin clothes himself in a robe of power obtained from his *shin kaa* and turns to confront the giant animal. As the story concludes, Dokesachiin speaks to the giant animal.

"Why did you come here? Are you going to eat Dokesachiin?" He said that. He went to meet him.

When he met him, he pushed the giant animal back with his hand. Dokesachiin asked the giant animal, "Why did you come here? My kids are scared of you." Dokesachiin said that.

The giant animal said, "I want to see you again." The giant animal told him, "Where you are moving, I'm going that way, too. Not too far from here, I'm going to wait for you. You keep me happy till I leave."

The giant animal went back down the hill, just fast. "I'll be waiting for you there," he told Dokesachiin.[21]

The story is about power derived from dreaming during *shin kaa* and maintained by dream contact with the giant animal friend. Although Dokesachiin lived before Makenunatane, whom Tommy Attachie called the first Dreamer, he was clearly a prophet who derived his insights from dream encounters during and after *shin kaa*.

After the transformative events of the fur trade and contact with Christianity, the Dane-zaa seem to have turned to a new form of dream empowerment for support. Stories about the later Dreamers, like those who came before them, show classic signs of shamanic empowerment. Makenunatane became a Dreamer after a period of initiatory disorientation and a symbolic death. The stories say that he "died" and was looked after for days until coming back to life and telling stories from his dream journey. The dream trail, he said, was a trail of song. He returned to life singing the song he had been following in his dream. Every Dreamer since then has brought back songs from his or her dream journey.

When songkeeper Tommy Attachie leads his singers in a Dreamers' dance song, he always names the Dreamer who first brought it back in his dream. These songs are different from the ones obtained by individuals in *shin kaa*. Whereas personal power songs are private and sung only to heal or protect a close relative, Dreamers' songs are the basis of a shared ceremony in which people dance together around a fire. By sharing a common trail, the dancers help one another overcome the bad feelings that might impede a person's travel along the trail to heaven. The songs rise up toward the heavens and the dancers' feet mark their movement along a common trail.

I was fortunate to be present when Charlie Yahey was dreaming the trail to heaven. One afternoon he went to a house in the community he was visiting with his wife. People knew that he would be dreaming for them and return from his dream trail with news of their relatives in heaven. A circle of

people sat quietly outside the house. They kept children and dogs away so that no sudden noise would startle him and interrupt his dream journey. A few hours later Charlie emerged and began to sing one of the Dreamers' songs. It must have been the song whose trail he had been following. He then began to speak. He told people about his dream journey and brought back messages from their relatives whom he had met at the end of the dream trail.

On another occasion, I asked him to tell me the Dane-zaa creation story. He began the story as follows:

> These people, the white people, must have known about how Sky Keeper created the world. They knew it because they read it in a book. I, myself, am not old enough to remember what happened. I don't know what was in their book. I don't remember that far back. I only know with my dream. With my dream I know about everything that has gone before. I drew a picture of the trail to heaven. I drew a picture of what I saw in my dream.
>
> The ancestors of the white people must have had a history about what happened long ago. They have a history about how he made it for them to live. That history is in their book.
>
> This land, this whole world, was created many times. This story is about two or three of the worlds that he made. A long time ago someone stayed in a boat.
>
> I don't know much, but with my dream I can find the trail. I can find the right way. I can remember when the Dreamers made new songs. I didn't say anything. I just listened to them singing. They sang new songs from their dreams. Ever since I can remember, I have been singing. Then I started to make songs from my own dreams.
>
> The Dreamers' songs are the music of the Dane-zaa. They are our music. The white people have their own music, but the Dreamers' songs are the Dane-zaa way, our way. The drum and the Dreamers' songs, those are our music.
>
> You must have good ears to listen. If you don't, you won't understand. Those who have good ears, those who are good listeners, will put their ears toward the storytellers. They will hang onto what they hear. They will listen to the stories. They will remember what they heard. They will hold onto all of it.
>
> I thought this man himself [Robin] knows everything about the creator because he is a white man, but he wants to hear it from me. He wants to know.[22]

Dreamers and Anthropology

I can only interpret the phenomenology of Dane-zaa dreaming from what people tell me about their experiences and those of others. I am not sure whether I have myself experienced lucid dreaming, perhaps because when I dream I experience no uncertainty about the authenticity of the experience. I certainly make no claim to have experienced dreaming as it is known to the Dane-zaa. I have learned *from* them as well as *about* them, but my personal

and cultural history remains different from theirs.

Initially, I learned about the powers of people with whom I interacted in the same way that other members of the community did. I learned that both young adults and elders had certain foods they did not eat or certain things that they should not have contact with. By interpreting these taboos in relation to the stories of giant animals from mythic times, I was able to guess what their *shin kaa* power might be. I knew enough, though, that while I respected these personal taboos, I did not ask people about them directly. It was particularly important to respect the personal space of these people and not challenge what were clearly representations of power. That said, over the years my Dane-zaa friends have been generous in sharing stories of their dreams and vision quest experiences. Jillian and I are now elders, as are the Dane-zaa contemporaries we have known for many years. Some of them are willing, at least to some extent, to talk about their *shin kaa* experiences, as in May's stories quoted earlier in this chapter.

Anthropologists have documented ceremonials based on a variety of dream experiences among many First Nations (Native Americans in the United States). Many of these Dreamers have used their dreaming to help their people respond to the challenges of contact with Europeans. The Seneca Dreamer Handsome Lake, for example, experienced an initiatory breakdown similar to the one described for Makenunatane.[23] The Ghost Dance prophet *Wovoka* was another Dreamer whose message was a response to the pressures brought on by European contact.[24] In the Pacific Northwest, *Smohalla* and *Skolaskin* reinterpreted precontact prophetic traditions. Like the Dreamer *Woesal*, who is said to have lived "some five hundred years ago,"[25] Skolaskin professed "dreams, revelations and prophetic powers" that he "claimed to have acquired through his illness and subsequent death, ascent to heaven, and return."[26] Dreamers were often associated with political movements that advocated independent Indian nations, as in the case of the Shawnee prophet *Tenskwatawa*, the brother of *Tecumsah* and founder of a utopian Shawnee village called Prophetstown.[27]

While most of the Dreamer-prophets during the long period of postcontact history created *revitalization movements*, many also paid tribute to Dreamers who preceded them.[28] Both dreaming as a source of individual empowerment and dreaming as the foundation of ceremony are common features of First Nations, and they were logical instruments for these people

to use in response to the challenges they faced during European assaults on their territories, livelihoods, and systems of belief. In every case, dreaming ahead for everybody seems to have been based on a core of individual vision quest experience.

The vision quest remains today a widespread practice among Native Americans. In some traditions, personal power is kept secret; in others, it forms the basis of public ceremonies. This pattern also extends to lucid dreaming. One of these ceremonies is the Ojibwa shaking tent, in which a shaman summons his spirit powers and, in a state of altered consciousness, calls upon them to communicate with him and through him with the people outside. Only the shaman himself could say whether this altered state is a form of lucid dreaming or trance, although it seems likely the two may simply be different perspectives leading to the same kind of phenomena. A more formal version of shamanic ceremonialism is what Dimitri Shimkin called corporate shamanism.[29] The Chippewa Midewiwin is a classic example. Mide practitioners hold varying degrees of power and participate in "a set of ceremonials conducted by an organized priesthood, who have occult knowledge of 'killing' and 'curing' by use of herbs, missiles, medicine bundles, and other objects which had medicinal properties."[30] The Chinook "blue jay cult" is another ceremony in which people with blue jay empowerment conduct ceremonies together.[31]

Laughlin points out the following common patterns in the ethnography of dreaming:

- Dreams are real
- Prophetic dreaming
- Dream ego as soul
- Contact with spirit beings
- Communing with the dead
- Dreams as oracles
- Problem solving and creativity
- Medical dreaming
- Dream sharing and social interpretation
- Dream power

- Emotional conflict
- "Big" dreaming[32]

To one degree or another, Dane-zaa dreaming exhibits every one of these patterns. Dreams are real, and a dreamer is capable of taking action from within the dream to influence events outside of it. Dreams are powerful and associated with the power obtained in *shin kaa*. Dreams are prophetic. Indeed, the Dane-zaa often translate the word *naachiin* as "prophet." Individuals dream to contact their spirit powers, while Dreamers contact their relatives in heaven. Individual dream power can be used to heal people who are ill; the power of Dreamers heals the entire community.

Conclusion

Dreaming in general and lucid dreaming in particular are by nature intensely personal experiences. Like other forms of consciousness, lucid dreaming can be described but not recorded or even shared, except through the intermediaries of language, myth, song, and ceremony. When Dane-zaa youth engage in the experience of *shin kaa*, they enter into an altered state in which wise stories become immediate and real. When a Dreamer like Charlie Yahey follows a trail of song along *yagatunne*, the trail to heaven, he "grabs hold of the song with his mind." Lucid dreaming among other Native Americans is similarly both personal and culturally mediated.

Through stories, songs, ceremonies, and personal testimony, it may be possible to interpret our own dream experiences in relation to those of other cultures. Dreaming is both biologically given and instrumental in creating the cultural structures within which we live. Contemporary Western culture has privileged waking consciousness above that of the dream state. It has attributed sentience only to humans and denied the possibility that nonhuman persons are integral to a shared animate world. By contrast, Native American cultures privilege dreaming and see it as a vital instrument for negotiating relations with the sentient and animate world around them. It should be possible for non-Natives to learn from them as well as about them without falling into the error of thinking that we have somehow become First Nations people ourselves.

An understanding of lucid dreaming among Native Americans requires respect rather than an attempt to possess one of their greatest assets. As Mescalero Apache religious studies scholar Ines Talamantez once told me, "You should not go around in borrowed feathers."[33] Your dreams are your own. They inform and are informed by your own culture and experience. Those of us who are not Native American can learn from First Nations traditions but must not make the mistake of attempting to possess them. Our ancestors have possessed their land and assaulted their language and culture. These are enough of a burden. We can learn from the First Peoples, but we must transform what we learn and make it our own.

Notes

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22. Translated by Billy Attachie; Charlie Yahey 1968 CMC 8-1.
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31. Verne Ray, "Lower Chinook Ethnographic Notes," *University of Washington Publications in Anthropology* 7, no. 2 (1938): 89–92.
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11

Hyperspace Lucidity and Creative Consciousness

Fariba Bogzaran

From an epistemological perspective, lucid dreaming could be considered a way of knowing. Exploring lucid dreaming, then, becomes a form of inquiry into vast spaces of the mind. While lucid dreaming has broad applications, it has also been used as a contemplative, spiritual, and creative practice.[1] The practice of lucid dreaming ultimately leads to the practice of lucid waking, creating a recursive relationship between waking and dreaming awareness.

This chapter focuses on particular creative methods to explore lucid dreaming and specific transpersonal experiences within lucid dreaming that I call *hyperspace lucidity*.[2] Hyperspace lucidity refers to experiences within lucid dreams that are beyond time and space, transpersonal in nature, nonrepresentational, and impersonal, yet extraordinary and impactful. In choosing this term, I decided to rely on literature outside of psychology, theology, or metaphysics, mainly to avoid assumptions carried by words already laden with meaning. For example, the word *numina* can have relation to light; *God* is interpreted differently in different religious systems; *emptiness* has a Buddhist reference and is a particular experience within this tradition. I adopted instead a word from physics and mathematics, *hyperspace,* and I imply that the phenomenon is both beyond space and an umbrella under which many transpersonal experiences can take place.

When confronted with the transpersonal aspects of lucid dreaming from the standpoint of research, we need to rely on multiple forms of knowing to best inquire, describe, and communicate these extraordinary experiences. Since the nature of hyperspace lucidity is multidimensional, the methodology employed likewise has to be multifaceted. Any single method would be limiting, but the combination of methods may provide the epistemological richness necessary to approach the complexity of the phenomenon.

In this chapter, I discuss five creative methods I have devised in the past 30 years to explore the transpersonal experiences in lucid dreaming, and in particular hyperspace lucidity. I give a summary of each method and explain how the process informed the next method, as I creatively engaged with each inquiry. The topic remained the same, but the methods evolved as I allowed a spontaneous unfolding of the phenomena.

My background in science, in art, and in Eastern philosophy and practice has been essential to the development of these methods. My lifelong research began with a series of personal experiences of lucid dreams in childhood. Through time, I pursued understanding of the experiences scientifically, and later I engaged in art-based research to continue these explorations. Before these inquiries, several mystical texts by realized Eastern philosophers and prophets were of great interest to me. I studied them academically and became deeply engaged in their hermeneutic. Among the systems I studied were Buddhist views, Taoist philosophy, Baha'i perspectives, and shamanic epistemology. These approaches helped me to have a larger view while engaging in research on transpersonal experiences in lucid dreaming. For the purpose of this chapter, and from among several texts, I chose two texts that enabled me to move toward multi-epistemology, which in turn led me toward a *hermeneutic of creation*.[3]

Epistemic Uncertainty

To explore the unknown or the unknowable, one has to be comfortable with not knowing. Thus, *epistemic uncertainty* is acknowledging that inside not knowing there is a knowing and that knowing is not necessarily expressed in words. It is almost presumptuous to think that the only way we can express the knowing is through words.[4]

Many different ways of knowing are possible, including intuitive knowing, creative knowing, performative knowing, and so on. Quantitative scientific methods, in particular, are useful and even elegant when we are exploring the observable. However, the method of approaching the invisible are not as easily measurable, and other methodological paradigms might be more suitable.

Beyond concepts and thoughts, beyond desires and ambitions, beyond

perception and psychological complexes lies timeless awareness. Lucid dreaming can dwell within that timeless awareness as a form of reflective practice that calls into question habitual behavior, fixed perceptions, and core beliefs or presuppositions. Not only is self-inquiry an integral aspect of this practice, but exploring lucid dreaming is also a vehicle to observe the mind's multidimensional nature and an occasion for a complex range of possible experiences.

Perhaps one of the most well-known and widely translated Eastern philosophical texts on the nature of timeless awareness is *Tao Te Ching* (*Dao De Jing*), written sometime in the sixth century BCE by Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu (Laozi). Translated, its title means *Tao* (The Way), *Te* (Virtue), *Ching* (Classic, Canon, Great Book). Lao Tzu offers his major philosophical presupposition very clearly in the first verse of this classic text. One of the numerous translations offers the first verse in this way: "The Tao that can be expressed is not the eternal Tao."[5] In many translations, "talked about" replaces the word "expressed." From the beginning, then, Lao Tzu reminds us that if we try to express and talk about the unknowable, we might be missing something. As the brief series of verses proceeds, using philosophical and poetic expression and employing nature metaphors, Lao Tzu hints at how *Tao* might be experienced. In so doing, he reminds us that there are ways of knowing other than through words or usual means of expression.

Another mystical text I explored in relation to this topic is by the prophet of the Baha'i Faith, Baha'u'alla, which lays the groundwork for the spiritual seeker and the levels of advancement toward the Beloved (in mystical texts, God is often referred to as the Beloved). Baha'u'alla's *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys,* written in 1863, was inspired by a question of a Sufi student directly connected to the work of the 12th-century Persian Sufi Farida's-Din Attar and his significant text, *Mantiqu't-Tayr,* or *Language of the Birds*. Attar poetically used the metaphorical language of birds that are traveling on a journey to meet the greatest bird, *Simurgh* (the Phoenix). Each bird represented different aspects, such as the lover, immortality, and so on. The birds had to pass through the Seven Valleys to reach *Simurgh*, metaphorically the Beloved—demonstrating the different journeys of the seeker toward attaining Divine nature. Within the Baha'u'alla text, I focused on the sixth valley, the *Valley of Wonderment.* The verse I continue to be enchanted by is this: "One of the created phenomena is the dream. Behold

how many secrets are deposited therein, how many wisdoms treasured up, how many worlds concealed."[6]

I used these two texts, the *Tao Te Ching* and the *Seven Valleys*, and in particular the two passages quoted here, as guideposts for my research and as sources of inspiration to launch into the unknown through the practice of lucid dreaming. Each of these verses holds a key to explore hyperspace lucidity. One text implies that there are worlds concealed in dreaming that we are able to explore when we are ready and prepared; the other reminds us that we might not necessarily be able to communicate what we find with known or regular instruments. The combination of these two teachings offers, first, that there are worlds within worlds that we can explore, and second, that perhaps we need to find innovative and creative ways of expressing the experience of these worlds and communicating the knowledge that is gained.

Creative Consciousness and Dream Logic

The common initial experience of becoming aware during a dream often takes place in a particular dream narrative that usually involves one or more of the following elements: dream ego (the dreamer in the dream), dream characters (those we encounter in the dream), and dream objects or dream settings (the environment of the dream). These elements are collectively referred to as potential *dream signs*. Paying attention to these dream signs, together with recording and reflecting on them, can provide significant clues to dreamers that they are dreaming and also assists with achieving awareness of our own dream ecology.[7] Each of these dream signs contains its own sets of complexity. For example, a dream object such as a teapot might look like a teapot but might not function as expected. In pouring tea, noodle-like strings, in the form of undulating lines, might flow out of it. Looking inside the pot, one might find a golden egg as the source of these strings! Even though the objects—teapot, noodles, strings, and eggs—are all recognizable and familiar, they are out of their normal context, collaged into a new narrative. Within the creative dreaming mind, such intersections, combinations, and fusions of objects, events, environment, and dream characters are normal occurrences. To use a musical metaphor, the dreaming mind is more akin to improvisational jazz than to classical structure.

Dreamers may choose to engage in lucid dreaming for multiple reasons. Often the dreamer's intention intersects with a particular application or activity, such as healing, meeting the deceased, resolving nightmares, and creative problem solving, among others. These activities (incubated or spontaneous) may arise within the confines of a particular narrative based on known scenarios, or they may be created as a surreal collage of events with new twists. If we understand the nature of the dreaming mind as creative in essence, the dream narrative thus has its own epistemological reality. From the perspective of waking perception, the dreaming mind may follow a nonrational path; yet from the mind's view of the dreaming itself, dreams follow a logic of their own. Dreams are not consistent in subscribing to the rules of the physical or social worlds, or even to their own rules. For example, in the same dream gravity may exist and then cease to exist. Dreams' malleable, spontaneous, and organic nature follows the principles of creativity. When we dream, we are inside creative consciousness.

Engaging creative consciousness, we begin to think beyond the constraints of perception or structure. Creative innovation brings unlike events or skills together, perchance to experience a new synthesis and birth a new idea.[8] Dreams employ the self's innovative capacities to construct new personal narratives, solve problems, connect events, and create new scenarios.[9] For all these reasons, the creative nature of dreams is one of the best examples of creative consciousness.[10] Even if dreams are not remembered or lucid, creativity in dreams continues without awareness.

Remembering lucid dreams enhances the understanding of the nature of creativity. Not only might we be pouring noodle-like strings out of the teapot, but we might also hold the source of the strings—the golden egg—in our hands. We might even have the urge to crack it open to see what is inside this golden egg. What we experience might be a world within a world in which, by awareness of *being-with*, we participate in its creation.

Not only does the dream follow the principle of creative thinking, but the dream source may also have its own ingenious direction. By paying attention to our dreams and by exploring lucid dreaming, our creative abilities are enhanced. For example, on a personal level, had I not been aware of my dreaming life and been receiving inspiration from my dreams (and lucid dreams), I would not have been able to engage with my inquiry in arts and science. Lucid dreaming enhanced my perception and enabled me to be the

co-creator with my dreaming mind, bridging those inspirations in waking, not only in scientific and creative activities but also in major decision-making processes in my life.

Ineffability and Methodological Challenges

A fundamental challenge arises when reporting dreams: the multidimensionality of dreams cannot be fully captured by words and narrative. This situation is even more problematic in the case of Big Dreams, involving transpersonal and other extraordinary dream experiences.[11] Much of the detail is lost in trying to translate one's experience. Recalling a dream becomes an act of selective perception. While we focus on the central image, it could be that certain spatial depth (perspectives?), images, and situations fade from memory because they are unknown or incomprehensible to us. It could be that we unknowingly "bracket" or leave out what is unknown to us.

What happens when the known perception and the familiar landscape disappear and the dreamer is confronted by the unknown? What I am referring to here is not a bizarre construct or surreal image, such as a table with a tail and the head of a beast, as in the surrealist paintings of Victor Brauner, or the melting clock of Salvador Dali. Both Brauner and Dali used familiar elements and objects either from dreams or creative thoughts to construct "dreamlike" images. In paintings of this type, classic surreal images were often laid within a dream landscape, with one horizontal line on the horizon implying time.[12] Rather, what I am alluding to is a particular experience in which the dreamer does not have visual, kinesthetic, or auditory references from waking life. The construct in this case is not a collage of unrelated known images or narrative, such as the earlier teapot example, but a construct of unknown and never-before-exposed experiences. These dreams —of the phenomena of light, void and emptiness, unity consciousness, and other nonrepresentational transpersonal experiences; that is, of hyperspace lucidity—are often referred to as *ineffable.* Because of their numinous quality, they are also referred to as *spiritual,* a term I refrain from using too often because it can have different implications for different people. The word "ineffable" is defined as "too sacred or too great to be expressed or described in words." Stanford art scholar Elliot Eisner explores different

types of knowledge and offers an argument for different ways of knowing: "Not only does knowledge come in different forms, the forms of its creation differ. The idea of ineffable knowledge is not an oxymoron."[13]

Within the experience of hyperspace lucidity, dream images, known environment, and dream ego and actions can disappear and at times dissolve. The dream may become devoid of content or concepts, yet consciousness remains. Because these experiences are often referred to as ineffable, it is challenging to communicate about or even research them. There is a knowing within ineffability that perhaps cannot be communicated through words.

Extraordinary dreams such as those of hyperspace lucidity challenge researchers in regard to methodology. What is the best method to research complex, infinitely open, and potentially unknown phenomena? How can we best gain access to them or communicate them? Quantitative methods engage phenomena horizontally (with quantitative description); qualitative methods explore the depth of themes related to the experiences vertically. What happens when words fail? If the phenomena are incomprehensible, or too complex to be narrowed down to the sequential framework of language, inquiry begs for the researcher to invent new methods to explore them.

Research into the unknown territories of consciousness, then, poses many methodological concerns. Charles Tart launched *state-specific science* to train researchers to enter specific altered states of consciousness from which they might be able to develop observations—and theories based on those observations—so as to apply a scientific method to evaluating whether experiences have an inherent logic of their own.[14] His attempts to develop methods from the transpersonal experiences of experts in the field show the challenges of using known scientific instruments to deal with the unknown, invisible realms of the psyche. In contrast, using creativity as a different way of knowing might complement and offer new perspectives to spark new ways of inquiry within hard science.

To best address these methodological issues, over time I have used five cross-disciplinary and complementary modes of inquiry to research and to communicate the transpersonal experiences in lucid dreaming. These methods began with the (traditional) quantitative method (1987–1989) and qualitative method, in particular phenomenology (1991–1994), and then moved on to three forms of art-based research: using still images (1996–1997), using new media and video (2004–2008), and using art installation

(2013). Each method addresses a different pathway of exploration and communication—some using linguistic means, others visual artistic means. Some of these methods could be deemed traditional, whereas others might be considered innovative and avant-garde.

In the following section, I focus on my methodological attempts to explore and communicate transpersonal experiences in lucid dreaming. I give a summary of each of these inquiry methods and show the process of how each method informed the next.

Experiencing the Divine in a Lucid Dream State: A Quantitative Study, 1984–1989

The first method I used for exploring lucid dreaming was meditation. The skill of self-reflectiveness allows the mind to lucidly enter into the hypnagogic state—that is, the state between wakefulness and sleep.[15] *Hypnagogia* consists of two Greek works: *Hypnos* ("god of sleep") and *agogia* ("leading to"). In this short juncture, which is often viewed as the transition between waking and sleep, the world of inner activities rapidly displays itself. The experience is not akin to a typical rapid eye movement (REM) dream or other state of consciousness in sleep, but dreaming-type experiences do occur in this state. The quality of this experience differs from other sleep states in that the imagery is more erratic, vivid, and often colorful in nature. (Figure 11.1) Hypnagogia is also auditory: hearing music, voices, choirs, and other sounds is common. Hypnagogia is a fertile ground for practicing lucid dreaming. Although traditionally the focus of lucid dreaming has been on the REM state in sleep, the hypnagogic state is an accessible state of consciousness to practice the method of lucidity.

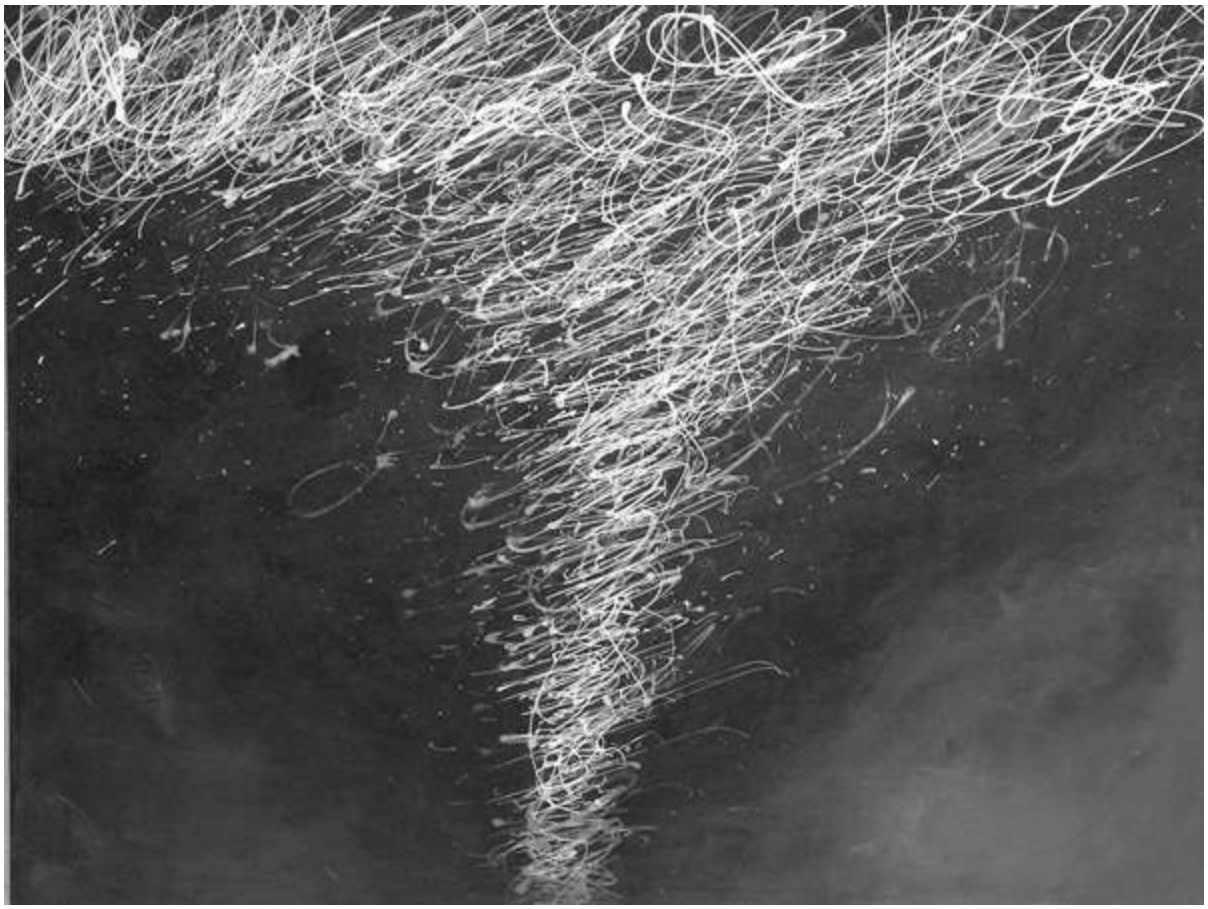

Figure 11.1.
Fariba Bogzaran, *Hypnagogic Spin*, 2007, Third Script #12, 46″ × 46″, acrylic on canvas.

In 1984, before I knew that I could use meditative methods for hypnagogic practices, I relied on scientific instruments such as various biofeedback devices including Mind Mirror to sustain lucidity in hypnagogia.[16] It was then that I decided that lucid dreaming was to become the topic of my scientific inquiry. Later, in the early 1990s, I discovered that by experimentation, exploration, and observation I had arrived at a practice similar to Tibetan Buddhist teachings relating to practices of *shamatha*.[17]

Even after Stephen LaBerge's classic 1985 book, *Lucid Dreaming*, was released, skepticism around this topic was high within scientific and academic circles.[18] LaBerge systematically proved the validity of lucid dreaming through his laboratory research and was creating a sophisticated induction biofeedback device, *DreamLight*, to explore the phenomenon. At that time, besides a few anecdotal reports, there had not been a scientific study of dream incubation relating to transpersonal experiences in lucid dreaming. Between 1986 and 1989, as part of the Lucidity Project team with

LaBerge at the Stanford Sleep Laboratory, I focused my research on transpersonal experiences in lucid dreaming. Various experiments took place, including incubation methods with the DreamLight device.

Exploring divinity in lucid dreaming without scientific instrumentation had not yet been done. Since the realm of experimentation was new, I had to create a method to explore this topic. The method evolved organically. First, I reflected on the history of how this practice had been important throughout time, even involving, in some cultures, dream incubation temples such as existed in ancient Greece. Second, I explored how intention could clearly be carried over to lucid dreaming. Third, I examined how existential questions, when posed sincerely, can invoke impactful experiences. In Tibetan Buddhism, this method is referred to as *pure motivation* and *pure intention.*

In the laboratory, LaBerge gave clear tasks to the dreamers—in particular, memory tests two hours before the participants went to sleep. One of the important tasks was to remember to perform deliberate eye signals indicating that the dreamer knew he was dreaming. This signaling often was remembered in the last two REM periods when the dreamer spent longer periods of time dreaming; the memory was also triggered and aided by the flashing light of the DreamLight biofeedback device. After signaling, there were other tasks the lucid dreamer had to remember. Having watched many lucid dream activities via signaling in the laboratory while hovering over the polygraph paper, I realized it might be possible for an advanced lucid dreamer to remember to ask an existential question and to be able to sustain lucidity, perchance to witness the outcome. I knew this was possible, as I had done it myself and I had read a few accounts of it, but I wondered if it were possible that such experiences could be induced within a specific incubation time period.

LaBerge was supportive of this idea and provided me with an archive of countless letters related to lucid dreams that he had received from people across the country. From that pool of about 2,000 letters, I was able to choose 250 experienced lucid dreamers to invite for the research; 77 joined the study, of whom 35 were able to carry their intention in the lucid dream. I proposed the incubation period be two weeks, which seemed the right amount of time to sustain the participants' interest and intention without too much distraction.[19]

I was well aware that creating a scientific method to seek God in dreams

is presumptuous. In particular, using quantitative research techniques seemed paradoxical. It became apparent that the key is to work with and be aware of the limitation of the method, rather than limiting the phenomena. The quantitative method is one way of knowing. Instead of thinking that this method would bring an ultimate answer regarding the magnitude of the phenomena, I viewed it as an initial step for gathering information about the varied experiences. Is there a monopoly on the experience of divinity in dreams, I asked, or are the phenomena experienced differently by different individuals depending on their historicity and religious belief?

Before embarking on this research, and during it, I followed an intuitive knowing; to have a deeper engagement with this experience, it was essential for me not to rely solely on my few previous spontaneous lucid dreams on this topic, but to dive deeply into it with the same method myself. Like an astronaut who takes the risk of launching into the great unknown of space, I, as an *oneironaut*, launched deeper into the space of the lucid mind. Although the study was quantitative, objective, and scientific, and there was no requirement that the researcher even have the experience, I realized that if I partook in the research, I would be able to view the findings with a much larger lens. Therefore, I assumed a personal semi-retreat for almost two years to incubate transpersonal experiences in lucid dreaming. First, I did the two-week incubation method that I had assigned to the other study subjects, but then I continued to incubate while I was conducting and writing about the research.

I had a variety of intense, numinous experiences while on this semi-retreat. These experiences ranged from the known narrative in hypnagogia, morphing from surreal imagery to phenomena of inner light and the numinous, to experiences of massive funnel-like movements transforming all content to another space-time. They also ranged from abstraction of the content to experiences of no content. Often the non-dual nature of the experience became also nonlocal. They seemed to correspond with the opening of the energetic systems in the body. These energetic systems are well recognized in ancient wisdom traditions, such as in the meridian channels in Chinese medicine, the circulation of qi in Qigong practices, and the activation of uma in the spine within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition and other systems of yoga. These “streamings” of life energy, as Wilhelm Reich referred to them, are also an essential occurrence in Kundalini experiences, something that researcher Ted Esser currently explores deeply in his

qualitative and quantitative research on lucid incubation (as described in his chapter in this volume).[20]

The research with participants across the country with different backgrounds and religious beliefs clearly demonstrated that it is possible to have transpersonal experiences in lucid dreaming via the incubation method. Findings showed a strong correlation between core spiritual beliefs and the experiences in the incubated dreams. This relationship indicated that our experiences can be limited or expanded based on our belief system. The power of core belief, in turn, can affect our perception of reality. In addition, setting intention can invoke and influence experiences. The study revealed that in light of flexible core beliefs, unexpected experiences might arise. Further, it showed that setting an intention and choosing a particular vocabulary can direct behavior inside the dream. Therefore, the way we construct language and set intention plays an important role in the direction of our thoughts and behavior.

It is expected that presuppositions about a phenomena might bring a certain result. But what happens when there is no expectation? The study showed that if the mind is presented with a big question within lucid dreaming and there is no attachment to the result, then within the unexpected the complex workings of the phenomena can be displayed. Cultivating the open mind as prescribed in Zen Buddhism means accessing a state of mind where there is no presupposition and the mind is open to not knowing. In that state, the experience seems to unfold from *creative consciousness*. Attempts to capture the experience with terms such as *emptiness*, *void*, *state of awe*, and *grace* are used, but each of these terms often carries presuppositions with previously attached meanings associated with them.

The study, and various synchronicities and extraordinary experiences of my own during and following the research, clearly showed me that there is "knowing inside not knowing." This *epistemic uncertainty* requires keen listening, intuitive knowing, and then a creative act. The study organically led me to examine core beliefs and explore a qualitative research method addressing this particular philosophical and practical quandary.

Moving from quantitative research to a qualitative approach is challenging. How does one shift from the paradigm of cause and effect and controlling variables to a method with different sets of roles wherein the researcher can also be part of the research? How does one account for

reliability and the integrity of the research? Adopting a new method does not happen by just learning the skill, but rather by deconstructing an entire paradigm so as to fully incorporate the new one. Once the new praxis is integrated, then it is easy to move from one to the other. In mixed methods, the combination of methods can often bring the most desired outcome. The next phase of my research in transpersonal experiences in lucid dreaming was to apply the lens of qualitative research methods—in particular, phenomenology—to study hyperspace lucidity.

Images of the Lucid Mind: A Phenomenological Study, 1991–1994

Soon after finishing the quantitative research, I met Gordon Onslow Ford, the last member of the Parisian surrealists. We lived in the same rural Northern California area, separated only by a canyon. Unbeknownst to one another, each of us engaged in studies of the ineffable; I was exploring transpersonal lucid dreaming on one side of the hill and Onslow Ford was painting what he called the "inner worlds" on the other side. On my daily walks on the ridge during my two-year semi-retreat, I could see two dwellings in the middle of the forest below the canyon that I later learned were Onslow Ford's home and studio; being on retreat, however, I never inquired who lived there. Through a series of synchronistic events, however, I happened to see one of Onslow Ford's paintings and recognized in it elements of hyperspace lucidity. Events eventually enabled our meeting.

Ironically, Onslow Ford was not aware of lucid dreaming, but he explained that his intention since 1939 had been to explore the dimensions of the inner worlds through painting. It was clear that he was using painting as an inquiry into consciousness and a way of knowing about the nature of the mind. His theory of "line, circle, and dot" pointed to the possibility of moving into different states of consciousness, which aligned experientially with some of the transpersonal experiences in lucid dreaming.[21] The similarities between what he and a circle of his painter friends had discovered through visual imagery and my lucid dream experiences launched the next research process.

After reviewing several qualitative methods, I chose the most liberal phenomenological approach, developed by Sunny and James Kidd, called the *experiential method*.[22] I worked closely with James Kidd for three years to learn and apply this method. Kidd was a "pure" phenomenologist. He could detect quantitative thinking within a couple of sentences. Before he agreed to work with me, he asked to read my thesis, *Experiencing the Divine in Lucid Dream State*. In our pursuant initial meeting, he handed me the text and suggested very seriously, "I highly recommend that you submit this piece of work to the Neptune Society [for cremation]—you have killed the phenomena!" In those years of working closely with Kidd, and through our regular dialogue, finally I began deconstructing and shifting my paradigm from the quantitative approach to embody the spirit of phenomenology.

In this study, I chose four highly experienced lucid dreamers, including two from my previous research, who had had hyperspace-like experiences. I then had them work with several images from four painters of the "inner worlds." Kidd and Kidd's experiential method provided an expansive window through which to explore the metaphysical experiences in lucid dreaming and engaging art as a mode of inquiry. The intelligence of the visual image became an aid to move the inquiry further.

The experiential method follows three dynamic movements: (1) a sustaining dynamic movement, staying with the vitality of the experience and identifying experiential expressions; (2) an expanding dynamic movement, focusing on emerging themes and intuitively turning toward meaning; and (3) a uniting dynamic movement, returning to context through reflective synthesis.[23]

In the study, modern art became a visual means to inquire into the phenomena of hyperspace lucidity. Besides selecting known images from classical to Impressionist to Surrealist paintings, I included some of Gordon Onslow Ford's "inner world" paintings (Figure 11.2), John Anderson's "depth paintings," Roberto Matta's "psychological morphology," and Lee Mullican's "instant paintings," which I recognized as having elements of hyperspace lucidity. Lucid dreamers viewed slides of the images. Ironically, they remarked on aspects of the work of the painters seeking to depict inner worlds as familiar elements in their lucid dreams! Some of the archetypes of nonrepresentational forms that the dreamers recognized were seen in the mass spirals, oscillating light lines, clusters of dots, and concentric circles in the

paintings.

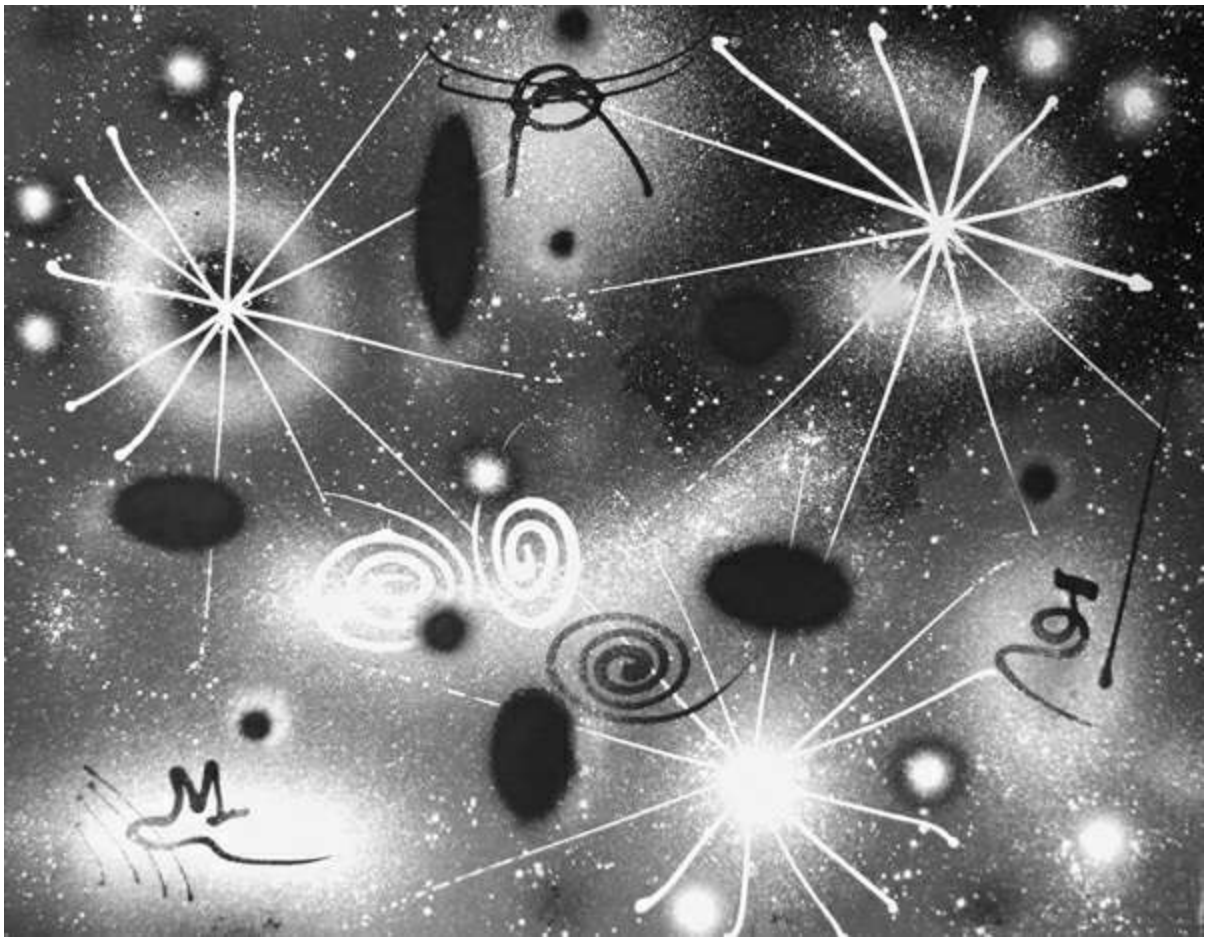

Figure 11.2.
Gordon Onslow Ford, *Blue Bonding*, 1991, 61½″ × 77″, acrylic on canvas.

These visual images provoked the dreamers to describe their experiences of lucid dreaming in more detail, whereas previously they had labeled them as ineffable. Forgotten details of the experiences were enhanced, colors remembered, and even types of dreams that had been forgotten came back to mind, such as hypnagogia. The visual vocabulary assisted the dreamer to "reexperience" the dream and recall its details, giving him or her better tools with which to articulate the experience.

Within the process of using the method, it became clear that even the most metaphysical qualitative method was too limited to capture the phenomena. *Creative epistemology* was needed to modify the method. After the interviews with the four painters and four lucid dreamers, I clustered the themes; instead of describing the experience, however, I created what I called

invisible dialogue. Although the painters and lucid dreamers were not interviewed together, the correspondence of the emerging themes and the usage of words between them were so compelling that I made the clusters into a dialogue. Instead of describing to the reader the findings, the invisible dialogue clearly revealed to the reader the common ground.

Within the experiential method, after theme analysis, the next step is to expand by "amplifying" description. However, instead of expanding as per the method, I further condensed the clusters from the invisible dialogue. Words in narrative form became too limiting. As Matta had made clear, "If we are not using poetry, we are repeating things." The poetic space was the chance to elucidate the "felt sense" of the experience.

Using *poetic epistemology* and referencing the Persian tradition of poetry, I intuitively selected words that strongly "stood out" within the clusters of the theme. Then, using the surrealist method of automatism, I brought the words into relation with each other while staying present to the description. I called the creative act that emerged out of this approach *poetic synthesis*. This hermeneutic of creation offered realizations and insights. As Eisner reminds us, "Poetry was invented to say what words can never say."[24]

The phenomenological research, *Images of the Lucid Mind*, connected hyperspace lucidity in lucid dreams and in the images of the inner worlds depicted by a particular group of modern painters who explore nonrepresentational aspects of the inner worlds. This study demonstrated that through visual images the dreamer can articulate more easily the seemingly ineffable experiences from lucid dreaming. It also illumined that the incubation and intention to explore transpersonal experiences in lucid dreaming and the application of creative artistic epistemology toward the same goal can provide common ground, even if they employ different modes of inquiry. In addition, the research showed that approaching art with the intention of inquiring into the mind is an important way of knowing about consciousness. Above all, it illustrated that even if we use different vocabularies and different methodologies to explore transpersonal experiences, the actual phenomena remain constant and infinite.

In experimenting with various methods, it became clear to me that multiple innovative methods for exploring multidimensional experiences offer a closer "felt sense" of the phenomena. If the first study investigated the possibility of incubating spiritual experiences in lucid dreaming, the second

study described the parallels between two modes of inquiry, guiding me to take the challenge to a wider audience.

Through the Light: An Exploration into Consciousness—Art-Based Research (Paintings), 1996–1997

The next natural movement was to have the painters and the lucid dreamers meet. The research unfolded in two sections: the contemplation of artworks by experienced lucid dreamers and highly practiced meditators, followed by a public exhibition of the paintings recognized by the lucid dreamers and meditators as relating to their inner or dream-time experience. Art-based research not being recognized as valid at the time, the Institute of Noetic Sciences nevertheless became a granting agent, supporting this visionary research.

The combination of the two previous studies informed this follow-up research, which begged for yet another creative method. For the first part of the study, I invited lucid dreamers and meditators to the studios of painters who had participated in the previous study, *Images of the Lucid Mind*, adding the work of another painter, Richard Bowman, who worked with intense colors akin to hypnagogic experiences.

Participants were invited to contemplate the works by sitting in front of the ones that moved them for half an hour and then to write a description of their experience. Theme analysis of the writings showed how the visual images elicited experiences that were familiar to those in dreams, lucid dreams, or meditative states. The collective response to particular paintings determined which pieces were then chosen for a major art/research exhibition called *Through the Light* (1997), held at the Arts and Consciousness Gallery at John F. Kennedy University in Berkeley, California.

Curators often build exhibits around a particular theme that arises in the curator's mind and, if the artists are alive, are produced with their participation. The *Through the Light* research project was not a curated show in a traditional sense; instead, the selection process came out of the collective resonance of the pilot study in the studio. The selection process was informed

by the qualitative study.

The carefully installed exhibition reflected the phenomena of light and space in lucid dreaming. The research was extended to public participation by inviting the attendees to select a painting that resonated with them, contemplate it, and write a description of their experience. Similar themes emerged: forgotten hypnagogic experiences and (forgotten) dreams articulating certain transpersonal experiences. A few individuals even began spontaneously writing poetic prose.[25]

None of the artists whose work was part of the exhibition spoke about hypnagogic experiences, hyperspace lucidity, or lucid dreaming. Yet their creations and the experiences of the lucid dreamers who had viewed them confirmed the reality of phenomena of the inner world that can be experienced through lucid dreaming, deep meditation practice, and a creative process that carries an intention of exploring the depths of the mind.

The installation of the exhibition was an integral aspect of the research. The paintings selected for the entranceway resembled the nonrepresentational fields of light in hypnagogic lucidity; the main room contained paintings akin to spatial fields within hyperspace lucidity. Thus the viewer entered into the numinous and then passed *through the light* to enter into another space/time. The experience of going through the light into spaces similar to transpersonal and energetic experiences in hyperspace lucidity gave the viewer an embodiment, a "felt sense" of being inside these experiences.

Encouraged to take part in the research, 49 people who visited the exhibit participated. The experiences evoked intense emotions for many, including joy and a sense of awe akin to experiencing these phenomena in lucid dreaming or deep meditation. Although words often fell short in the viewers' ability to explain and describe their reactions, it was clear that the images and their relationship to each other within the installation space had created an environment to awaken and elicit aspects of hyperspace lucidity.

Through this research, it became clear to me that visual art is an important mode of knowing and that it has a place as an integral aspect of inquiry methods when exploring ineffable experiences. Following this research, Gordon Onslow Ford and I continued our dialogue and developed an art direction, calling it *Lucid Art.* Lucid Art converges the phenomena, expressed in a work of art that elicits in the viewer aspects of the inner worlds. This concept emerged directly out of the research studies described previously.[26]

One Night of Sleep: Art-Based Research (Video and Performance), 2004–2008

Motion and sound relative to images are also integral aspects of the experience of dreaming; thus focusing on words and still images as the primary mode of inquiry is limiting. The natural next step was to create images that combined sound, movement, and color to create a multivisual and auditory experience. I performed a literature review of varieties of sensorial experiences within dreaming, lucid dreaming, and numinous and hyperspace experiences. I also studied content analysis and possible dream experiences throughout a single night. Based on the visual and auditory emerging themes, I created a video to show the phenomenology of dream experiences according to the scientific map of one night of sleep. These experiences ranged from hypnogogic experiences, different stages of sleep, and different types of dreams, to REM, lucid dreaming, and transpersonal experiences.[27]

Presentations of art-based research are often misunderstood if the venues are not art related. After I presented these videos at three different conferences of the International Association for the Study of Dreams, it became apparent that the inquiry was not for aesthetic purposes only, but rather an attempt to research the lucid mind via different modes of inquiry. On the topic of video as research, Janice Rahn writes, "This cross-disciplinary position brings into question the relationship of art as a specific autonomous language and the role and purpose of art in its larger social context. The art discipline contributes a vocabulary and a variety of nonconventional approaches to using video, as well as an evolved critique of mass media."[28]

During my 30 years of engaging and exploring through science and art, I have noticed that the findings from scientific inquiry are often more valued than those from artistic inquiry. Art is often seen as a form of aesthetic pleasure or expression for a purely visual feast rather than an important epistemology. My own conclusion, however, as presented in a lecture at the Institute of Noetic Sciences in 2000 called *Art as Research and Research as Art*, is that there are six main areas of similarities between scientific inquiry and artistic inquiry: (1) choosing the inquiry, (2) gathering material or data, (3) choosing a method, (4) experimentation, (5) result, and (6)

communication (e.g., writing, exhibition, film).

The art-based research videos offered a perspective meant to communicate the reality of different experiences in the dream state. I created original sounds and images and combined them with other artists' works in which I found resemblances to particular states of consciousness within sleep. Although the artists themselves did not relate their work to any particular states of consciousness, the works might have reflected certain archetypal experiences, as revealed through previous research and literature. These compositions gave a visual key to the inner experiences. I also searched archives of videos and still images for aspects of hyperspace lucidity. At the time, very little was found on the Internet. Yet through editing and special effects, I was able to communicate what previously was reported in writing.

After the viewing of the videos, the discussion focused on the audience's own resonance and their familiarity with the imagery and experiences. The digital epistemology served as a phenomenological method based on the archetypal themes, which in turn elicited in the viewers aspects of their own inner experiences. The digital media became a tool for enabling the audience to speak about the forgotten dreams—areas of dream experiences that can be hard to describe in words.

Ironically, the experiences at that time considered indescribable have today, using sophisticated digital animation, become ubiquitous; we can even see animating effects in movies and advertisements, such as when a car that is at first moving through space in its normal form suddenly becomes particularized into thousands of dots and then recombines into its normal shape. Or fast-moving lines suddenly become a form before returning back to a line—these are similar to the initial visual images within hyperspace lucidity.

Over the course of my four-year inquiry into video art research and the exploration of various lucid dreaming phenomena, the creative process informed and evolved the method to allow participants to step into a holographic space. In that space, not only was there the presence of a video but also live performance, sound, and poetry, creating a palpable environment that brings the "felt sense" of various lucid dream experiences. As art historian and cultural analyst Griselda Pollock calls it, the space served as a "visual field."

In the 2005 multimedia art piece including performance and video,

Creation vs. Destruction, the audience was no longer a passive witness as in the experience of watching a movie; instead, the theatrical and interactive nature of the multiple methods jolted the audience into becoming lucid in waking.[29] The research experiment sought to have the audience reexperience aspects of the dreaming mind and be lucid in it. This method was expanded by performative acts of certain archetypes. For example, if the viewer was watching a film scene of a typical sleep paralysis encounter, with an incubus approaching and pressing the chest of the dreamer, the actor who played the role of the terrifying incubus suddenly and unexpectedly also appeared from behind the film screen into the audience. Now the audience was no longer vicariously experiencing someone else's dream, separated by their own experience from an event; the audience had the direct experience, with the presence of this archetype in their own space. Within the sleep paralysis scene, the experience turned from a terrifying encounter to lucidity of the fright to transformation of the emotion into a numinous experience.

The multimedia act gave the audience the full experience of various phenomena—visual, auditory, and performative—and created a palpable dream space to reexperience and be fully lucid and make the transformative choice, perchance to experience transpersonal experiences in lucid dreaming. The audience response was palpable as participants' realized that the video presentation and performance was not simply a form of entertainment, but rather a deep inquiry into consciousness in sleep and its transformative potentials.

Lucidity: Art-Based Research (Installation), 2013

In 2013, I was invited by art historians Peter Selz and Anne Brodzky to bring multiple methods of inquiry into consciousness to an exhibition of my artworks at the Meridian Gallery in San Francisco.[30] I continued this inquiry using installation methodology with 30 years of my own artworks. In a two-week installation period, I constructed the space with works that would elicit a particular inner world experience for the viewer (Figure 11.3). Art works demonstrated the morphology of form into creation of a space akin to many experiences within lucid dreams, hypnagogia, and hyperspace lucidity.

Figure 11.3.
Fariba Bogzaran, *Morphology: From Matter to Light*, 1995, 13″ × 10″, pencil on paper.

I titled the exhibition *Lucidity* and used the three floors of the gallery as different epistemologies. The first floor introduced multiple paradigms of knowledge; the second floor concentrated on (two sections) scientific knowing and contemplative knowing; and the third floor exhibited modes of transpersonal knowing. Seen from another perspective, the three floors represented the three shamanic planes: the underworld, the middle world, and the upper world. Creative epistemology connected the entire exhibit into a whole. The installation followed these epistemological directions for acknowledging the validity of multiple ways of knowing.

On each floor, I created a particular space with images and conceptual objects that led the viewer to move from one plane of existence to the next. On the top floor, I installed paintings inspired by experiences of hyperspace, Kundalini experiences, and experiences of the numinous. The installation was also elemental, moving up from the first floor: earth, wood, fire, water, space, and energy.

This installation was created to reveal the parallels between art making and scientific inquiry. It showed how one can use different instruments to inquire into the same phenomenon. In my work, each of the compositions is an expression of an inner experience that eventually became a co-participant with the creative process. Thus I see each work as an experience while being created, but perhaps also as a portal through which others may enter into a particular space. When the art works are in a specific relational space with one another, they elicit a particular lucid experience. Most of the images in the exhibition had been elicited by several extraordinary lucid dreams or dreams specifically incubated for the exhibition. Since the works were inspired by impersonal transpersonal experiences, the "I" or sometimes the "subject" had disappeared and in most works only energetic traces remained.

Acting as an artist-in-residence, I would visit the exhibition frequently and engage with the audience and their experiences. In particular, I engaged with one participant who was visiting the gallery for the fourth time and asked why she kept returning. She answered, "I can't put it into words, but the space makes me feel good. It calms me down. It brings a sense of awe." I asked her if there was a particular painting or object that elicited these feelings. She replied, "It is the combination of all of it." Thus the experience was no longer about the artist or one individual work; rather, the particular relational space created with a particular intention (of certain lucid dream in mind) enabled a "visual field" that elicited in the viewer experiences similar to those reported in all the other research related to transpersonal experiences in lucid dreaming. Art theorist Graeme Sullivan, in a discourse on art as a way of knowing and painting as research, takes a deeper view of the role of art and artists: "The capacity to look beyond what is known to seek possibility of new understanding is what artists do. Knowledge may be power but insight makes a difference."[31]

The installation addressed the self as a multidimensional being and acknowledged the value of multi-epistemology. Most of the viewers

gravitated toward images experienced in hyperspace lucidity. Having walked numerous groups through the exhibition during the six weeks of the show, I observed how people reacted inside the different spaces of each floor. Particularly on the third floor, which concentrated on my 30-year inquiry into the transpersonal aspects of lucid dreaming, I saw similar reactions among the individuals walking through the space—they seemed to enter a quiet, reverent state. The installation was made such that in the narrow long room, one entered into form; as one slowly walked toward the end, the forms would morph into light and then into essence. Many visitors were visibly moved while walking through the tunnel-like space. There was no interpretation of images or forms or references to the known, but it created a familiar collective experience. Since I do not seek to illustrate hyperspace lucidity in painting, but rather I reenter the phenomena through the act of painting, it allows the canvas to become the occasion of a new experience and inquiry for the viewer.

Conclusion

Researching the transpersonal aspects of lucid dreaming requires the researcher to use not only multiple methods, but also innovative ones. My own progression went from focusing first on the hard scientific quantitative method, and then to qualitative methods, in particular phenomenology. I next explored the same phenomena in art-based research with still images, then digital images, and finally installation art to invite others to enter into these worlds. The incomprehensible remains incomprehensible; however, looking back over 30 years, I see increasing openness toward this inquiry and emerging glimmers of understanding.

Lucid dreaming itself is one method of exploring the phenomena of the inner world. The *Lucidity* exhibition showed that the multiple forms of inquiry require creation of a familiar space so that many can co-participate with their own creative and innovative consciousness. Through this relational space, perhaps new insights and realizations might emerge. Rather than one mind creating one method to explore the phenomena, collective minds create a space in which the phenomena are elicited and experienced through poetic synthesis to give glimpses of the experience.

If these experiences have archetypal roots, collective co-participation moves beyond the mind of one researcher seeking to grasp this vast knowledge or reduce it to understanding. The openness to inquiry with pure intention can bring realizations that might not include new information, but that elicit confirmations.

The key to this practice is to *sustain* the experience and to approach the inquiry with an absolutely open mind to allow creative consciousness in each case to inform the next step. Inquiry, therefore, becomes the practice. The cultural movement toward the interdisciplinary view of consciousness and an integral view of dreaming seems to be the next paradigm, shifting toward co-participation for approaching subtle inner realities. The intersection of the new physics, consciousness, and art might be the catalyst for the development of a new creative multi-epistemological method to explore transpersonal experiences in hyperspace lucidity.

Notes

1. Stephen LaBerge and Howard Rheingold, *Exploring the World of Lucid Dreaming* (New York: Ballantine, 1990).
2. Fariba Bogzaran, *Images of the Lucid Mind: A Phenomenological Study of Lucid Dreaming and Modern Painting* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI, 1996).
3. "Hermenutic of creation" is a term I coined and first used in the book *Integral Dreaming;* Fariba Bogzaran and Daniel Deslauriers, *Integral Dreaming: A Holistic Approach to Dreams* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2012).
4. "Epistemic uncertainty" is a mathematical term but I adopted it as a philoshophical term to explore the knowing within not knowing; Bogzaran and Deslauriers, *Integral Dreaming*.
5. Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching,* trans. Ch'u Ta-Kao (London: Buddhist Society London, 1948).
6. Baha'u'llah, *The Seven Valleys and Four Valleys* (Wilmette, Illinois: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1945).
7. Stephen LaBerge and Lynn Levitan, "Discovering Dreamsigns: What Makes a Dream Seem like a Dream," *NightLight: The Lucidity Institute Newsletter* 1, no. 2 (1989): 5-10.
8. Howard Gardner, *Creating Minds: An Anatomy of Creativity Seen through the Lives of Freud, Einstein, Picasso, Stravinsky, Eliot, Graham and Gandhi* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).
9. Stanley Krippner and Joseph Dillard, *Dreamworking: How to Use Your Dreams for Creative Problem Solving* (New York: Barely Limited, 1988).
10. Bogzaran and Daniel Deslauriers, *Integral Dreaming.*
11. Stanley Krippner, Fariba Bogzaran, and Andre Percia de Carvalho, *Extraordinary Dreams and How to Work with Them* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2002).
12. Yves Tanguy eliminated the line of horizon, which implies objects float in space without reference to time.

13. E. Eisner, "Art and Knowledge," in *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research,* ed. J. G. Knowles and A. L. Cole (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008), 5.
14. Charles Tart, "States of Consciousness and State-Specific Sciences," *Science* 176 (1972): 1203–1210.
15. Andreas Mavromatis, *Hypnagogia: The Unique State of Consciousness between Wakefulness and Sleep* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987).
16. Mind Mirror is a small electroencephalograph (EEG) device created in 1976. It detects the frequency of brain signals and functions similar to a biofeedback device.
17. Thrangu Rinpoche, *A Guide to Shamatha or Shiné Meditation* (Boulder, CO: Namo Buddha, 1990).
18. Stephen LaBerge, *Lucid Dreaming* (New York, NY: Ballantine, 1985).
19. Fariba Bogzaran, "Experiencing the Divine in Lucid Dream State," *Lucidity Letter* 10, nos. 1–2 (1989): 169–176.
20. Ted Esser, *Lucid Dreaming, Kunalini, the Divine, and Nonduality: A Transpersonal Narrative Study,* unpublished dissertation, California Institute of Integral Studies, 2013.
21. Gordon Onslow Ford, *Creation* (Basel, Switzerland: Galerie Schreiner, 1978).
22. D. Kidd and J. W. Kidd, *Experiential Method: Qualitative Research in the Humanities Using Metaphysics and Phenomenology* (New York: Peter Lang, 1990).
23. Fariba Bogzaran, *Images of the Lucid Mind*.
24. Eisner, "Art and Knowledge," 8.
25. Fariba Bogzaran, *Through the Light: An Exploration into Consciousness,* John F. Kennedy University (San Francisco: Dream Creations, 1997).
26. Fariba Bogzaran, "Lucid Art and Hyperspace Lucidity," *Dreaming* 13, no. 1 (2003): 29–42.
27. These art-based research projects were presented at the following conferences of the International Association for the Study of Dreams: Copenhagen (2004); Berkeley (2005); Montreal (2008).
28. Janice Rahn, "Digital Content: Video as Research," in *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research,* ed. J. G. Knowles and A. L. Cole (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008), 303.
29. Fariba Bogzaran, *Creation vs. Destruction,* multimedia performance with Emily Anderson and Seth Eisen, Berkeley, CA, 2005.
30. P. Selz and A. Brodzky, *Lucidity: Fariba Bogzaran: A Retrospective* (Society for Arts Publication of the Americas,Meridian Gallery, San Francisco, 2013).
31. Graeme Sullivan, "Painting as Research," in J. G. Knowles, & A. L. Cole, *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research,* ed. J. G. Knowles and A. L. Cole (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008), 242.

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12

Kundalini and Non-duality in the Lucid Dreaming State

Ted Esser

An Introduction, a Dream, and a Story of Research Becoming

For the last 10 years I have been working on research that culminated in a study examining intentional experiences of *kundalini* and non-duality in the lucid dreaming state. Kundalini can be quickly defined as a powerful form of internally experienced spiritual energy, and non-duality can be quickly defined as experiential oneness. This chapter offers a brief account of my journey as an emerging dream researcher looking into some of the farther reaches of human consciousness and what was discovered along the way.

As a child of the 1970s in the Midwest, I began to seriously doubt some of the Episcopalian teachings on God due to a combination of some vague notions about science and some equally vague, unsatisfying answers from a harried Sunday school teacher. This doubt sparked enough internal emotional energy to produce the following lucid dream:

> *I am inside a warm, humid greenhouse, filled with plants, slowly making my way from one end to the other, breathing in all of the thick floral and faunal aromas, taking in the splashes of color among the dominant greens. I hear a comforting babble of water spilling down rocks across the way. Arriving at the other side, I see a stone, rounded staircase with a small fountain at the top. As I ascend, water from the fountain trickles down the algae-covered rocks on both sides. A few steps from the top, I look up and see the sun through the glass roof, somehow brighter and clearer than usual, through the arched, glass ceiling—only to realize this sun was alive. My waking awareness, lucidity, surfaces into my dreaming mind; my dreambody's senses heighten. I stop at the top of the staircase, still looking up in wonder, now with a gnosis—a vivid, complete certainty—that I am gazing at the Divine. This is happening, I am told clearly, but wordlessly by the light, directly into my dreaming mind, in response to my reaction of disillusionment over the loss of God.*

I awoke filled with awe and wonder, my doubt about God's existence diminished, but a disconnection with the Christian story, such as I knew it, remained. As the years passed, the power of the dream faded in the face of our scientific-materialist culture that describes the physical world so well, in spite of the fact that I had many lucid dreams and spiritual experiences in the years before and after this encounter with the Divine. However, these early experiences and influences led to an interest in regularly cultivating lucid dreams in late adolescence after my reading of Stephen LaBerge's 1985 book *Lucid Dreaming*. The resulting lucid dreams and experiences eventually took me on an unexpected journey of discovery.

The research study discussed here involved an experienced group of research participants who used a lucid dreaming meditation protocol designed to catalyze kundalini and non-dual experiences. The participants were interviewed about many aspects of their subsequent experiences and their impacts upon their lives.[1] The qualitative analyses conducted on the interview data focused on the *meanings perceived* (narratology), the *things perceived* (phenomenology), and the *amount of times things were perceived* (a gray-area quantitative analysis) by the participants.[2] A transdisciplinary framework of transpersonal psychology, consciousness studies, religious studies, and dream studies informed the study's discussion of the results, just as it will later in this chapter.

Defining Terms

Before returning to the story of how the study came together, a brief examination of some of the terms and assumptions from the research study that we will be discussing will be helpful. The *Oxford English Dictionary*'s definition of a *lucid dream*—"a dream in which the sleeper is aware that he or she is dreaming and is sometimes able to control or influence the course of the dream"[3]—is broadly understood and mostly sufficient for our purposes here. However, the research participants did not need to control the dream, only execute the protocol and witness it.[4]

Kundalini in the context of the original study only broadly inferred the energetic process with its potentially culturally pluralistic transpersonal and mystical expressions. I did not enter into the study with the research

participants assuming that they would discover that kundalini was divine or that it was tied to some form of ultimate feminine divinity—the only assumption was that the outcome of the participants' experiences might differ. While the vast majority of the "subtle energy" of kundalini is considered to be locked *in potentia* at the base of the spine before "awakening," it purportedly flows in smaller measure throughout the body. It can be compared to the water behind a large dam with a modest, gentle flow of water on the other side. This subtle, psychic energetic stream is known as *prana* in Hinduism, *lung* in Vajrayana Buddhism, *qi* in Traditional Chinese medicine and Taoism, the Holy Spirit in esoteric Christianity, and subtle bioenergy or spiritual energy by some Western transpersonal theorists.[5] Transpersonal psychologist Stuart Sovatsky calls kundalini the intelligent, "motherly force that facilitates the ultimate maturation that is possible for a human being to embody emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually.[6] The term "kundalini" was chosen as the study's label for this precise aspect of *pranic* phenomenon because it is by far the word most commonly used in English for it.

When kundalini is awakened, it initiates a process that yields a larger set of more powerful phenomenological attributes compared to what, for instance, many intermediate qi gong practitioners may regularly sense. What many Westerners call "kundalini awakening" can be more precisely identified as *pranotthana*—a preawakening heightened energetic phase where *prana* can be felt more dramatically than before, but still lacks the attributes of catalyzing more powerful core spiritual realizations.[7] An actual kundalini awakening occurs when a *pranic* stream pierces a major energetic blockage (*granthi*) just below the bottom base chakra found near the perineum. Kundalini then rises up any number of energetic channels, including the largest one in the center of the vertical axis of the body (*shushumna*),[8] moving through the body with one's awareness *within* it, entering central points (*bindus*) within other subtle energetic nexus points (*chakras*) along the *shushumna*, and facilitating the realization of non-dual awareness or experiences of or unity with the Divine's various aspects. Lesser initial risings without these powerful realizations are more accurately called *pranotthanic* awakenings.

After a true kundalini awakening, the kundalini process continues with varying levels of intensity and experiences depending on the channels (*nadis*)

through which the energy can travel, removing smaller energetic blockages (*samskaras*) that seem to also release conscious and subconscious psychological issues along the way. The more physiologically noticeable phases can take anywhere from a few years to a lifetime to move through, depending on the person. This upwelling of subtle energy reportedly moves throughout the body and psyche, causing various mystical experiences that also catalyze changes in behavior, beliefs, and the emotions matching what is found in people who are unusually psychologically and spiritually loving, sound, and whole.[9] However, in some cases, especially when proper guidance and preparation are lacking, psychological and health problems have been reported.[10] This is a key aspect of the phenomena to remember when I refer to the preparations and precautions to be taken before utilizing the protocol with clients or for oneself.

In the original research study, the term "Divine" was used instead of "God" because it is capable of having various meanings without adhering to any one religious tradition or sect and has been previously shown to be used successfully in this pluralistic sense.[11] In different religions, the Divine can have many names or no names, be used in concert with images or without images, be described in *via negativa* or *positiva* expressions, and so on. The term can encompass both a "Supreme Being" and a "characteristic of or consonant to deity"—thereby describing atheistic interpretations of divine experiences ("consonant to") and also nontheistic conceptions ("characteristic"), such as those encountered in Tibetan Buddhism.[12]

For the purposes of the study, I used David Loy's definition of "non-duality"—the experiential unity of "seer and seen, subject and object."[13] This sense of non-dual abiding includes the experience of activity:

> [E]xperiencing this way is without the distinction normally made between the perceived object and the subject that is conscious *of* it . . . [In] the case of action . . . mental "overlay" of intention also superimposes thought on action and thereby sustains the illusion of a separate agent; but without such thought-superimposition no distinction is experienced between agent and act, or between mind and body. Nondual action is spontaneous (because [it is] free from objectified intention), effortless, (because [it is] free from the reified "I" that must exert itself), and "empty" (because one wholly *is* the action, there is not the dualistic awareness *of* an action).[14]

Although the general view of orthodox Christianity, for example, is dualistic in the sense that God and human beings or our souls are not capable

of being realized as identical, it is the case that Western culture has produced many suppressed mystics like William Blake, Hildegard von Bingen, Meister Eckhart, and Teresa of Avila, all of whom professed some version of this mystical realization.[15] With these key terms in mind, we can now return to the story of how this dream research came to pass.

The Making of a Dream Researcher

When I was 23 years old, doing my undergraduate work in communications and photography at the University of Washington in Seattle, I had been consistently cultivating lucid dreams for the past five years. I had begun a new meditation and hatha yoga practice from an essentially nonspiritual point of view. However, I was in for a shock—I experienced a totally unexpected, paradigm-shifting kundalini awakening. At the time in 1992, I did not know what was happening to me; I had not heard of kundalini before. While we can find out more easily about it now than in the early 1990s, the information about it can often be, at best, inadequate: for example, the *Oxford Online Dictionary* says, "kundalini [is the] latent . . . energy said to lie coiled at the base of the spine . . . [There is a] system of meditation which aims to direct and release this energy."[16] Much of the literature about kundalini addresses how to *awaken* it, but not what to do *after* it is awake. The *OED* does not even mention, among other things, that the kundalini process leads to mystical visions and realizations—and, as we will see later, dreams. Fortunately, I had begun to regularly record my dreams in a journal the year before this awakening. I say "fortunately" because the dreams and the journal became my map and compass, leading me through the labyrinth into which I had been dropped.

After several satisfying years of work in educational and public television, the pull of my inner experiences led me to San Francisco. There, at the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS) in its Philosophy, Cosmology, and Consciousness program, nearly all of my research papers revolved around theories of consciousness, dreams, and spiritual energy.

During this time I began my work at the Spiritual Emergence Network (started by Stan and Christina Grof in 1975), where I was trained to answer calls from people having difficulties from experiencing new or difficult

transpersonal experiences.[17] Not long after I began working there, the organization lost its funding, so its counseling center and main office had to shut down. I convinced CIIS's administration to let me continue the work alone as a volunteer. This work would later prove to be a crucial component to my ability to conduct my lucid dreaming and kundalini study years later.

Toward the end of my master's program in 2003, I encountered Fariba Bogzaran's 1990 master's thesis, *Experiencing the Divine in the Lucid Dreaming State.* Her quantitative research used a simple but profound lucid dreaming protocol that reportedly catalyzed amazing, lucid experiences with the Divine among her research participants in a short two-week period. I used her protocol that night—the results were immediate and life changing. So many questions jumped into my mind: How could it be so easy to have such a powerful experience? What will happen if I keep doing this? Why wasn't this research more well known?

In that first reading I had taken note of four things that Bogzaran's research participants and her analysis did not report. Two were possibly semantic in nature, but I suspected might be of vital importance. One I thought to be of fundamental interest to the kundalini process—neither Bogzaran nor her research participants made any reference to the Divine as kundalini or as feminine. There were descriptions of the male Divine and of an energetic matrix impersonal Divine[18]; thus there was God but no Goddess present. Finally, there was no direct use of the term "non-duality" in either the participants' reports or Bogzaran's analysis.[19]

As I used Bogzaran's lucid dreaming protocol over the next few days, I discovered another important facet of divine lucid dreaming that she did not report. Nearly every time I did the protocol, I would receive instruction from what I perceived in gnosis to be the Divine. This occurred in a number of ways. Sometimes it was the feminine Divine, and sometimes it was an impersonal force of energy that I associated as one of the ways that kundalini manifests. At other times, when the dream would remain unaltered for a few seconds, I would be informed as to why it was not happening from what I sensed was a powerful, mysteriously veiled Divine source; I was then given instruction in how to be able to safely realize greater and greater aspects of divine experience with spiritual teachings or psychological insights.

I continued on with my doctorate studies at CIIS, focusing on East-West psychology and consciousness studies—again concentrating on dreams and

their connections to spiritual energy. This chapter contribution before you is a summary of my dissertation completed there, *Lucid Dreaming*, *Kundalini*, *the Divine*, *and Nonduality*: *A Transpersonal Narrative Study* (2013). The study would come to examine research participants' experiences with kundalini and non-duality through a slightly altered version of Bogzaran's divine lucid dreaming meditation protocol that I have come to call "LINK," an acronym for "Lucid Incubation of Non-duality and Kundalini."

With this idea in mind, I completed the pilot study for the dissertation in early 2005.[20] It appeared to further confirm Bogzaran's research,[21] while also proving to be amenable to inviting kundalini and non-duality into the research participants' awareness. By the time I began to work on my dissertation proposal and put together my committee and advisors,[22] I had more than two years of heuristic (conscious and carefully observed) experience with the lucid dreaming protocol.[23] With my committee advisors' help, my time at the Spiritual Emergence Network, my own personal experience, and an unusually extensive literature review of kundalini and lucid dreaming research, I was able to convince CIIS's human research review committee that my methodology and procedures were safe and that I could go forward with what was considered a high-risk study.

A Very Brief History of Divine Lucid Dreaming Research

To my knowledge, Bogzaran's study is the only one of its type to use research subjects in the way that she did, as opposed to gathering various retrospective reports of spontaneous experiences. However, several accounts of divine lucid dreaming are closely related to the present study—retrospectively narrative, phenomenological, autobiographical, and historical accounts by several contemporary dream researchers, including Patricia Garfield, Kenneth Kelzer, George Gillespie, G. Scott Sparrow, Jayne Gackenbach and Harry Hunt, Jane Bosveld, Anthony Shafton, Swami Sivananda Radha, Daniel Deslauriers, Fariba Bogzaran, and Kelly Bulkeley.[24] While many others have contributed to the religious, anthropological, and historical literature in this area, the named researchers

were among the key dream studies influences for the original research study, and I invite the interested reader to become familiar with their work.[25]

Research Questions, Procedures, and Protocol

While Bogzaran's analysis of the data was largely quantitative, I saw that the advances made in quantitative lucid dreaming research and transpersonal psychology since that time would allow me the latitude of using what is called a gray-area mixed research method, which is dominated by qualitative analyses.[26] This allowed for the space to try to replicate aspects of her lucid dreaming method, while facilitating an expanded exploration of the research participants' experiences, along with the meanings and psychological shifts that accompanied them. These analysis methods triggered many research questions for me to ask in addition to those that Bogzaran's inquiries generated. For example, did the research participants experience kundalini using the protocol and if so, how many? Did they perceive it as being divine or divine in origin? How did they perceive it as being divine? Did the research participants experience non-duality and if so, how? What were the perceived meanings, shifts in identity, and senses of changed fulfillment that research participants associated with using a lucid dreaming meditation protocol designed to help induce experiences of kundalini and non-duality?[27]

I gathered a pool of 75 research participants who all reported that they experienced lucid dreams about three times per month on average over the previous year. They answered questionnaires about their spiritual practice history, with an emphasis on lucid dreams, subtle energy, and transpersonal experiences. Fifteen people were chosen for taking psychological evaluation tests to further ensure their suitability for the study. Thirteen people—five women and eight men—then embarked on the two-week study period using the protocol. Five of the 13 had reported being in the post-awakened kundalini process for various lengths of time, another five were *pranotthanically* active for the past several years on average, and three of the participants had reported having various lower-level *pranic* experiences (these three participants did, however, have many powerful transpersonal experiences in their history, including one who had extensive *pranotthanic* dream activity).[28] Because achieving lucidity was not an issue for them,

suggestions for using particular lucid dreaming induction methods were not given.[29]

During every sleep session (including naps) over a two-week period, the research participants incubated for lucid dreams "safely" involving kundalini before going to sleep. "Incubated" meant gently holding this intent for 20 seconds to 2 minutes, then letting it go—falling to sleep as they wished. "Safely" meant having the desire for kundalini to manifest only in a way that would not physically harm them or be beyond what they could psychologically or spiritually handle.[30] In other words, this instruction implied that if it was not an appropriate time for kundalini to safely appear, they did not want it to manifest—hence, this was, in the end, an invitation, not an evocation.

Once lucid, if the presence of kundalini was apparently absent, the participant repeated the lucid incubation for kundalini's safe appearance, gently holding this intent for 15 to 30 seconds and then letting it go. More specifically, in the research participants' instructions, "lucid incubation" meant a gentle invitation/intension without attachment to outcome (and "invitation/intension" implied that kundalini is not necessarily something "outside" of the participant, yet one must hold a great respect for the power and unknown aspects of kundalini in the core of the psyche, whatever it is). The participant then began to meditate, witnessing the dream. The participants understood "meditation" to mean that they would gently clear their minds of thoughts and maintain an open, relaxed presence—if thoughts came, that was fine; they were to let them fall away without effort. No other meditation techniques were to be used unless the research participants felt prompted to do so in the moment or by the dream.

If or when kundalini became present in the dream, participants were to witness it or choose to interact with it in a way that seemed appropriate to them, including "safely" incubating non-dual awareness (via kundalini) as they had previously and then continuing to witness the dream. If kundalini did not appear in their awareness within approximately 30 seconds to 3 minutes, they were to repeat the lucid incubation. If participants felt moved to do so, another optional step was suggested—they could safely lucidly incubate for kundalini and/or non-dual awareness to continue in their waking consciousness after the dream. After waking up, the participants were instructed to document *all* of their dreams, regardless of lucidity, content, or

"success," in a journal.

The Study Results

This section first recounts the overall study results, and then dives deeply into the experiences themselves.

Some Numerical Results

None of the research participants had ever before overtly invited kundalini into their awareness while lucid dreaming. Two of the participants had done forms of lucid dreaming meditation that were similar, however: one had given Reiki energy to others, and another meditated without specific goals and energetic experiences would spontaneously arise. Of the 13 people, 10 finished the study. All 10 reported experiencing kundalini in the lucid dreaming state in some fashion. In addition, many remarked—and the analysis of their narratives confirmed—that the dream nearly always immediately responded to their lucid incubation of kundalini. Seven of these 10 reported experiencing kundalini directly, and three reported sensing its presence indirectly in a paradoxical way. These three participants felt that doing the protocol brought them to the "precipice" of experiencing kundalini in an overt fashion—that is, the lucid incubation for kundalini resulted in instant dream shifts imparting inner guidance or transpersonal experiences, giving them information that they believed would facilitate an eventual overt experience of kundalini if they continued using the protocol. These three also reported that they arrived at a "precipice" or an opened "door" to kundalini where the presence of it was felt or sensed—just paradoxically not enough to say they experienced kundalini in an overt or "direct" way.

Six of the original 13 participants had experiences of kundalini that continued from the lucid dreaming state into the waking state (five of the six of these participants had never had previous lucid dreaming experiences with kundalini). Three of the five participants who reported being kundalini awake and three of the five participants who reported being *pranotthanically* active

experienced kundalini in the lucid dreaming state that continued into the waking state. Of the three participants who did not report having awoken kundalini or being *pranotthanically* active before the study period began, two experienced kundalini in the lucid dreaming state and one reported experiencing it continuing into the waking state.[31]

Seven of the 10 participants who finished the study believed kundalini to be the Divine—the other three were unsure, but sensed that this could be the case. Those seven tended to have more powerful encounters during their lucid dreams. Of these seven participants, five reported realizing non-duality during some of their experiences. Of these five individuals, four reported having non-dual perception, continuing into the waking state for between several minutes to half a day. Three of them experienced residual positive non-dual psychological effects, such as an increased sense of peacefulness, spontaneous joy, and an easeful openness to present circumstances lasting for a couple of days, but using grounding techniques was sometimes important to remain focused. All six believed their experiences were connected to ultimate reality in some way.[32]

All of the participants who did the protocol at least once (12 of the 13 in the group) reported that their dreams responded *immediately* in some way upon initiating the protocol's invitation virtually every time. The overall tendency was for kundalini's experiential power to be in proportion to the previous amount and power of their kundalini experiences (or other transpersonal experiences).

The study protocol's results were quite evident, dramatic, and powerful, but this was not much of a surprise given Bogzaran's previous results,[33] the results of the pilot study,[34] and the results that I had experienced over the past few years. Because of the unique nature of this research, the only directly relevant study with which to compare this one is Bogzaran's investigation. However, the things that she reported quantitatively were not directly relevant to many of the present study's numerical descriptions. The rates of success for lucidity and enacting the protocol were 35 of 77 for Bogzaran's participants (approximately 45.5 percent) and 12 of the 13 for the current study (approximately 92.3 percent). This difference likely reflects the smaller number of research participants in my protocol pool, as I chose those candidates who had the highest rates of average monthly lucidity to increase the likelihood of success in executing the protocol during the study period.

My study was able to benefit from Bogzaran's finding that the precise wording of the participants' lucid incubation is very important for successfully realizing incubation objectives, such as intending to *experience* the Divine versus *seeking* it.[35]

All of the participants in the final quantitative analyses pool of six assumed kundalini to be the Divine before the study began and after their experiences; these beliefs, without exception, were reinforced by their experiences. The study did not try to replicate Bogzaran's research in this exact area. Her results showed an 83.33 percent (personal Divine) to 86.96 percent (impersonal Divine) correlation between preexisting beliefs and experiential outcomes (but there were number of participants who did report how kundalini manifested differently than their expectations).[36]

The Research Participants' Experiences

The numerical results give one kind of impression, but the interviews themselves give a potentially more far-reaching and internally profound kind of impact. Initially, 15 research participants were chosen to ensure that there would be enough people who would be successful with the protocol to conduct the study's qualitative analyses. Two dropped out just before the study period and three withdrew during it. All 13 (including the three who withdrew) had experiences of some sort. Due to length considerations involved with narrative analysis, only six of the 10 research participants who finished the study were selected for closer analysis, based on their reports' abilities to provide a representative variety of experiences. Three men and three women were selected to evenly show the results from both genders. All 23 of these six participants' successful protocol dreams were analyzed in the original study. Two of these lucid protocol dreams are quoted extensively in this chapter. All six participants were European American (except Susan's father, who was from Lebanon),[37] middle class, college graduates, and between the ages of 28 and 61 (median age 45) at the time of the interviews. A brief biographical sketch precedes each sample dream; a thematic analysis follows.

Susan

At the time of the study period, Susan was 52. A native Californian, she lives

in a rural community on the border of Nevada. She holds a BS in biology and is a wildlife biologist and an outreach communications specialist in that field. She has a committed male partner and one grown son. She was raised Catholic, but has been most influenced by Tibetan Buddhism over the last eight years, and had received training in Tibetan dream yoga. She was *pranotthanically* active for the six years leading up to the study. In the year before the study began, she reported having, on average, 8 to 10 lucid dreams per month. She had lucid dreams with kundalini content before the study, but she had not lucidly invited kundalini into her awareness before.

Over the two weeks, Susan had four lucid dreams in which she successfully performed the study's protocol. In all four experiences, kundalini manifested and continued into the waking state. Presented here is the first of these four dreams. Of the four, this one featured an especially powerful continuation of kundalini and non-duality into the waking state, and is the only one where Susan had non-dual perception.[38]

> . . . *I seem to start out the dream already aware that I was dreaming* . . . A little girl appeared beside me . . . I was seated . . . She took my hand. She was dark haired and dark skinned and wore a pink dress. I could see in the early morning twilight . . . her skin grew darker and her hair get curlier, showing her recent African ancestry . . . She urged me to go out and play with her.
>
> . . . So I headed out hearing . . . playful laughter as she scampered out behind me. The scene was drab in the gray early light, a gray slope down to a gray shed . . . I decided to go down and sit against . . . the shed to stay grounded. {I couldn't resist flying a bit on my way there.} Descending, I looked for the girl and couldn't see her, although I still heard her rhythmic laughter. I realized the sound was my own sleeping breath.
>
> I decided to let go of the idea of the girl and keep my focus on my breath . . . I sat . . . feeling . . . the shed behind me [facing north] . . . I saw only a bare and overgrazed hill with mounds of horse manure here and there. I . . . commenced meditating, *inviting kundalini* and then focusing my eyes a few feet in front of me . . . my breath . . . had a slight squealing sound which came through my nose and seemed associated with orange and blue colors in my mind.
>
> Now this part takes only a few words to tell but this was the most significant dramatic intense part of the dream . . . Intense vibrant electric-like energy moved smoothly in horizontal bands up and down all through my body. The scene before me became vibrant bands of orange light. That's all the words it takes to express that, but this is kind of the core of the dream. *There was a duration and an intensity to that experience that the words don't convey* . . . I would say . . . my subjective experience of it was probably less than a minute . . . but somehow saying that it's that short an amount of time makes it sound like less of an experience than it was . . . [It was] intense in the sense of completely occupying my consciousness and taking over the entire sphere of my experience . . .
>
> . . . The energy took on a wonderful feeling [of] sexual focus and I seemed to begin to wake, but I didn't want to yet. I found myself sitting under a thick trunked tree and both to stay in the dream body . . . and to indulge a sensual urge, I reached up above me with my arms

around the trunk and swung my legs up to encircle it . . . Pulling myself up from under the tree, I found it had become a red clay fountain. This is a very surreal scene that I'm describing . . . *I don't know if I'll be able to find words to describe it or not* . . . I had a very mystical feeling to this whole experience. So the tree . . . had become a red clay fountain, round like a flower with thick rounded edges, sort of like a poppy (the tree trunk having been a stem), water flowing up from its terra cotta depths. I sat on its . . . rim moving my face to catch the spray of a single narrow stream that jetted above the surface. The energy and sense of wonder and delight continued to flow through me throughout. The water . . . [was] significant. I turned . . . to resume my meditation and now find I was at the top of a slope of red-orange bedrock . . . I sat cross-legged. I slid rapidly to its base where it met a green grassy plane that had been crossed by a recent mudflow . . . I stopped just short of the mud.

Water came flooding in . . . a silty flow about eight inches deep . . . I was swept to my feet . . . The energy, which had been surging throughout, both filling and surrounding me, gathered into an orgasmic peak. The scene became a geometric pattern of blue and white light surrounded by a glowing orange field and I watched it scintillate as I awoke into orange light . . .

Researcher: And then what happened when you woke up from this dream?

Susan: I'll say right now . . . *words are just not adequate to describe it* and it seems to me that if I hadn't experienced it I would have trouble convincing myself that it was as profound as it felt at the time. There were things that I was experiencing that had already been intellectual knowledge to me, but I felt them as direct experience in a way that I hadn't before . . .

I lay as I was for a long time on my side, arms crossed in front of me, eyes closed, bathed in poppy orange light, letting the energy continue to surge through me, arching my whole body at times—and when I say "arching," I don't mean that it was me arching my body, I mean the energy was arching my body. My body was spontaneously responding to the energy, moving, so it was not voluntary on my part. . . . I committed the dream to memory, then I lay on my back and surrendered to the energy, feeling extraordinarily light and joyful . . . The energy moved strongly and smoothly, usually foot to head . . . often causing . . . a big shake and shudder to go all through. I invited it sometimes and sometimes it invited itself into my heart chakra or second chakra where it would cause strong movements centered in those parts of my body . . . a jolt hits me in my heart and then the shaking radiates from there . . .

As I consider the largely sexual focus the energy took on in this dream, I had a vision of a very natural-looking image of my external genitalia juxtaposed with an image of what might be described as a great, orange, tubular flower of life up which the energy was flowing with a message that sexuality is beautifully integral to the purpose of life itself . . . I kind of went back and forth between thinking of kundalini as an "it" or personifying it [as the Divine feminine].

The biggest jolt through my heart chakra came when it occurred to me to invite Yogananda as my guide . . . With this idea, my hands spontaneously drew together in a *namaste* gesture and my heart sort of flew open, my arms and legs flying up and out, lifting the covers which slowly, gently wafted down over me with a feeling of most wonderful beneficence . . . Repeated the heart chakra thing maybe eight times at will. { . . . I . . . let go of any attachment to the dream imagery or this particular experience . . . to move towards what lies beyond, ever more expansive experience . . . the last two times the covers wafted over me, they covered my face and transformed the orange light to peaceful expansive darkness—a glimpse of emptiness.} {[For] half an hour . . . I lay in bed inviting the energy to continue moving me before I opened my eyes.}

I got up and began drinking my usual morning liter of water and making tea and I started laughing. And went on and on laughing and laughing until tears rolled down my face, laughing at the beautiful perfection of everything . . . So I pretty much spent the whole morning on this

experience . . .

Researcher: How long would you say that went on before it subsided into what would be a more typical state in the days before?

Susan: I guess it gradually subsided throughout the course of that day and by the next day, by the next morning's dreams, things were kind of back to [normal].[39]

Research Analyses

For deeper analysis, a thematic analysis was first used on all 23 lucid dreams from the six research participants.[40] A succinct way to describe this method is that I meticulously, repeatedly combed the interview transcripts looking for themes of meaning across the entire dream in a holistic manner—taking the entire story of the dream, including emotions, various phenomena, waking after-effects, and the participants' interpretations, into consideration, while also examining its content via plot analysis. I used Taylor's and Ullman's group dream interpretation methods (both during the interviews and in the subsequent analysis), where the dreamers' own interpretations of their experiences were the primary ones used.[41] I respected the fact that their dreams had a high level of layered complexity and deeply personal meaning with emotions that were experienced within a context of the dreamers' total history. Ullman's interpretive device, "If this were my dream . . ."[42] acknowledges these issues and forced me to be clear about why and from where any additional thoughts, theories, and insights about the participants' dreams came from.

Susan's Thematic Analysis

Turning back to Susan's dream, we begin with an abridged interpretation of what the dream meant to her:

You know, I hadn't really thought about it, but I think just because it kind of seemed natural and obvious to me in a way . . .

. . . [T]he little girl who took me by the hand at the beginning of the dream . . . what came to my mind on writing the dream is that of course we're all African in origin if we trace back far enough. And to me that's . . . representative of the unity of all of us . . . there was a sense of innocence and playfulness about it all, her pink dress, she was very feminine, very innocent and sweet and loving and playful.

. . . And the shed just seemed like something that was convenient for me to sit down and

put my back up against, so I could feel that and have myself grounded in the dream. Facing north, I've noted the directions in all of my dreams because sometimes they are significant to me . . . I kind of associate it with the associations [that] the Plains Indians gave to the directions —north is the direction of wisdom.

The . . . thick tree trunk that turned out to be the thick stem of this flower-like thing that turned out to be a fountain, so, it's kind of this flow and continuum of growth and movement and life-force and the water flowing up like another manifestation of life-force. And why there was one narrow spray of water that I arranged myself so that it struck me in the face . . . [?] Fully immersing myself in it . . . { . . . what comes to mind now as a way of expressing it is that the tree and a flower were manifestations of life and growth and the water as . . . flow and movement. It was . . . about life force and about the flow of energy . . . I kind of wondered a bit about what the mud might mean . . . well, another powerful flow. . . . There's a lot of earth in the dream . . . right down to the piles of horse manure. . . . [W]hat occurred to me at the time of the dream was . . . "Eew, I have to sit here and look at horse manure while I meditate . . . Well, you know part of the whole point of meditating is accept whatever there is and just be with it." So, that's what I consciously thought within the dream . . . }[43]

And then the water . . . came flooding in, was turbid and silty and just kind of alive in a way, I guess—just carrying so much with it. It just came surging in with a great sense of liveliness . . . and swept [me] off my feet in more ways than one I guess, figuratively as well as literally . . . *There's probably more that doesn't quite make it into words. I knew that words were inadequate even as I was writing them*.[44]

Here I offer an abridged account of my contribution to the analysis of Susan's dream. It begins with the themes of unity, playfulness, knowledge, and nature. Susan notes that inviting kundalini into her awareness was profound, dramatic, and intense—the core aspect of the dream, completely occupying her consciousness, taking "over the entire sphere of [her] experience . . . [with] . . . a wonderful feeling sexual focus."[45] She connected this experience to divine action—that healed spiritual and psychological aspects of herself. The scene changed—Susan found herself sitting under a tree. In this part of the dream, like many of the participants, she describes the energetic and mystical effects of kundalini as being both surreal and ineffable.

Susan continues to describe the scene: "I sat on [the fountain's] north rim, moving my face to catch the spray of a single narrow stream that jetted above the surface. The energy and sense of wonder and delight continued to flow through me throughout. The water . . . [was] significant." This aspect of the fountain, given the context of kundalini, is very reminiscent of the iconic images of the Hindu god Shiva, with the same thin jet of Ganges river/amrita (kundalini stream) emanating from his head.[46] After meditating, Susan slides down the hill to the mudflow and then a silty water flow sweeps her to her

feet—the mud perhaps indicating the process of clearing *samskaras* (subtle energetic blockages).[47]

From there, the surging energy gathered into an orgasmic peak. "The scene became a geometric pattern of blue and white light surrounded by a glowing orange field and I watched it scintillate as I awoke into orange light . . ." At this point, as Susan awoke, her experience continued with waking visions that engaged her physical body in radical ways, bringing in the themes of ineffability and knowledge; then divinity, connection, guidance, unity, and love; followed by emptiness and non-duality. Susan spent the whole morning basking in the afterglow of the experience, which gradually subsided throughout the course of the day. She said that the dream felt like a step in the course of her spiritual development. She was one of only two research participants who discussed a synchronistic link between the Divine and the physical world in a way that interestingly matches, for example, Kashmir Shaivism's idealistic monist view that dreams, kundalini, and the physical world are all interlinked in vibration—one reality—perhaps pointing us toward how synchronicity might be possible within what Dean Radin calls "field consciousness."[48]

Narrative Analyses of the Whole Group

What follows is a brief examination of the group's lucid dreaming protocol experiences shown through the lenses of three types of narrative analyses. Another narrative analysis method was used on the 23 dreams from the six research participants, this time examining all of the themes categorically to obtain a fuller accounting of the groups' themes as well as to study them together to perceive any thematic trends across them.[49] Originally, the themes were divided into singular, minor, major, and meta-themes, based on numerical criteria. The meta-theme, experienced by all six participants, was the Divine Kundalini. Protocol-induced, kundalini lucid dreams averaged approximately 14 themes each. Transpersonal themes involving kundalini manifestation dominated, followed by how its manifestation interacted with their egoic minds' preexisting themes. The thematic labels and categorizations that I have chosen are not meant to be construed as definitive, but rather are illustrative of one approach to discussing characteristics, observations, and tendencies found in the data. While the original study analyzes all of the themes in numerous tables, for our purposes here, they can

be summed up quickly in two sentences—each word a condensation of the thematic data that illustrates how the kundalini process operated within the groups' dreams.

The first sentence is about what kundalini does; it is composed of the aggregated themes that make up the meta-thematic components of the Divine Kundalini meta-theme:

> The Divine Kundalini facilitates the egoic surrender, healing, connection, and realization between the self and the psyche, the self and other people, and the self and the nondual Self-Divine, with transpersonal experiences that use both challenging and affirming circumstances—revealing the mystery of itself to Itself.[50]

The second sentence, using the same source material, is more descriptive about how it does what it does, using key themes and realizations from the peaks of the research participants' most powerful experiences:

> The Divine Kundalini, a mystery revealer and transpersonal vehicle of connection within the psyche of the lucid dreamer, requires egoic surrender in order to catalyze various forms of divinely infused egoic transformations, causing an increased sense connectedness to other people, to the core of themselves, and to nature—all facilitated by and suffused with a pervasive sense of meta-paradoxical and meta-nondual power, love, and bliss that is *Being*.[51]

The dreams of the participants are nearly universal in clearly showing that kundalini was the central component to revealing core meaning, psychological insight, and perceptual delight—all while being the driver, passenger, and vehicle of the dreaming itself. These experiences often produced a sense of wonder (and later peace) in the participants. "Meta-paradoxical" and "meta-nondual" experientially simultaneously encompass paradox and non-paradox and dual and non-dual, respectively.

Because the way that the meta-theme, the Divine Kundalini, emerged in the participants' dreams and the manner in which it transformed the meaning and structure of the dreams' narratives and dreamers' perceptions were so fundamentally different from the other parts of their dreams, the meta-theme warranted other types of analyses to give a clearer picture of how these lucid dreams were experienced. Next, we examine in detail how the appearance of kundalini changed both dreaming narrative and meaning.

Consciously inviting and experiencing kundalini in a meditative lucid dreaming state tended to reveal that at the height of many of the most

powerful immanent dreambody experiences, non-duality was realized. As a result, the dream shifted from having dualistic, subject-object meaning to being non-dual—beyond having a sense of meaning for the dreamers (one *is* love, rather than experiencing love, for example). Eventually, meaning reasserted itself, but the meaning and the themes were transformed with the resumption of dualistic perception. This is not to say that the non-dualistic perceptions were meaningless in a nihilistic sense. Peak moments for these dreamers were paradoxically simultaneously meaningful and not meaningful in what can be called a para-meaningful sense. In virtually all instances, research participants characterized peak moments as ineffable, beyond the ability of words to describe. This non-dual "mode" of awareness is well known during waking-state kundalini visions, but again this is an account of the first study of its kind to detail lucid dreaming experiences of it.[52]

Next, I conducted another group analysis of the six participants, identifying linguistic characteristics used to express the varying degrees of peak experiences of kundalini activity so as to discover how the "indescribable" is described.[53] The results of this analysis revealed that the "core" nature of kundalini had four key thematic descriptors depending on two modes of consciousness: dual consciousness = experiences of paradox and mystery, whereas non-dual consciousness = experiences of meta-paradox and resolved mystery. This "resolved mystery" had two aspects: a transcendent omniscience at the largest peaks of the kundalini experience and a non-omniscient "embodied" non-dual awareness of only "what is at hand" after these peaks. This transition not only brings aspects of mystery back into the experience, but also helps illustrate why the experiences are ineffable.

Yet another group analysis focused on how the structure of the dream changed during the process of dual → non-dual → dual perception within the psyches of some of the research participants during kundalini's more powerful peaks.[54] This perception shift was found to be embedded within a parallel pattern of a thematic meaning shift that unfolded as meaning → meta-meaning → transformed meaning → integration.[55]

John

As a representative sample of this type of lucid dream, the following example is presented in its entirety to give a sense of the process and shifts in consciousness just described. At the time of the study period, John was 61; he

was born in Washington, D.C., and currently lives in one of the larger towns in western Montana. He holds a BS in mechanical engineering. John began his career as an engineer and is now a computer consultant. He is married with three children and four grandchildren. He was raised as a Methodist, but for much of his adult life he has intuitively pulled together aspects of several spiritual traditions. He reports having had a kundalini awakening 35 years ago and has been in process with it ever since. In the year before the study, he reported having, on average, between 5 and 50 lucid dreams per month.

Here John describes his first use of the study's protocol:

> I'm walking around a room and I see my sister . . . I look down and see my sister sitting, kneeling over . . . and I think, "That's strange that she's here," . . . because I'm living in Montana, she's living in D.C., and I wouldn't normally see her. . . . I know that I have shifted my consciousness and I have the intention to become lucid . . .
>
> I walk over to my bed and I lay [down] . . . and my intention is to become lucid. And from that I now shift my consciousness even more and I come out in . . . an old Spanish courtyard . . . the scene shifts [twice]. I realize that . . . I am in a dream . . . I'm realizing . . . I have been in a dream the entire time . . .
>
> So I want to test [the] dream . . . I'm in a kitchen and I go, "Okay I'm gonna run up this wall." . . . There's a corner poking out at me where the kitchen goes two different directions, and I hesitate because it's a little bit scary because I'm not totally sure I'm in a dream . . . and I figure it's gonna hurt if I run into this corner . . . I just plow into this corner and merge into that corner of the wall and I go, "*Okay, I know I'm in a lucid dream*," I know I'm there, and *I invoke the kundalini again to come to me, and I invite it to come into me right now. I invite the nonduality experience to come into me*," and I shove myself hard, backwards, and push myself out of the visual experience into the stream of energy and I sit there. *My body disintegrated into the energy.*
>
> I'm sitting there in that stream of energy, opening myself up to the kundalini, opening myself up to that nondual experience, and there's no visuals at this point, it's all experience and *flow* and just force going through me and I'm being careful to balance the intense energy and the potential of snapping back out and being in my body, in my bed and being awake. . . . It's like trying to tune a piano or a string and just get it to be exactly right and not go too far one way or the other way but to stay in that narrow band—that I have to stay out of the body and stay in that *flow*.
>
> . . . There's a lot of sensory . . . body feel . . . and there's a sense of weightlessness *and there's a sense of sound, no more than I can put words to what the energy flow means or is*. *There's too much of it that's just not wordable*. A couple of times, I wanna see what's around me and I say, "Clarity now, let me see what it's like." I'm just totally past that seeing, I'm totally past the visual part of the experience, I'm just way away from that way of being in the energy, it's just full flowing. It feels like just a rush. *It's just so outside of time*—but I was past vision.
>
> . . . The energy finally, it's just smoothing out, slowing down, and *I pop into a scene* . . . I'm completely lucid [and] I pop into a group of close friends . . . I can feel the closeness . . . I can feel that connection. It's nobody I know here . . . in this reality, but it's a group that I know really well there . . . *And I miss* [*them*], *so I get back into the experience*, I can feel . . . missing . . . them . . . missing connecting with them more—it's a connectivity

> beyond the brain consciousness, and I miss that, I miss that a lot . . . Wonderful dream, wonderful experience.[56]

In subsequent questioning, I confirmed that John's sense of non-duality, the feeling/knowing/being of no subject/object perceptive split, begins at the end of the third paragraph after saying, "*I invite the nonduality experience to come into me*, and I shove myself hard, backwards, and push myself out of the visual experience into the stream of energy and I sit there. *My body disintegrated into the energy*."[57] His normal, egoic self also disintegrates at that moment. He identifies the non-dual kundalini experience of sound and energy flow with ineffability: "*There's too much of it that's just not wordable*."[58] Dual perception returns in the sixth paragraph, "but it's a group that I know really well there . . . *And I miss* [*them*], so I get back into the [dualistic] experience, I can feel . . . missing . . . them . . ."[59] This sense of "missing" stems from the dualistic perception of a loss of full connection or oneness, where there is now a subject loving and others to be missed.

John also stated that any remaining sensations of kundalini abruptly ended upon returning to the waking state. For the research participant group as a whole, as with John in this case, when the kundalini dissipated or stopped, whether in the dream or after awakening, the retrospective meaningfulness after the peak of the dream for the peak experiences arose in a form that closely matched, for example, Hinduism's Advaita Vedanta's textural descriptions of an ineffable *satchitananda*—having the simultaneous qualities of knowledge of reality, core consciousness, and blissful, loving power.[60]

A Phenomenological Group Analysis

Finally, I examined the results of the group phenomenological analysis that again focused on the research participants' peak experiences that occurred after the lucid incubation of kundalini.[61] This approach allowed me to closely survey the *sensorial* aspects of these peak experiences, now focusing on kundalini lucid dreaming components other than meaning. Often these sensorially compelling constituents of the dreams contributed to the emotional, psychological, and spiritual impact of the participants' experiences. This influence would not come through clearly with narrative analyses alone.[62]

Kundalini experienced in the lucid dreaming state had no fixed appearance. It manifested in ways that were very similar or identical to what has been previously reported in waking, visionary kundalini states by previous researchers.[63] Some of the most common ways that kundalini manifested sensorially included the following:

- *Proprioceptive:* Soft electricity, liquid energy, sexual desire, snakes moving
- *Hearing:* Divine music, buzzing bees, electric hum
- *Sight:* Geometric colored light patterns, snakes, water, vivified nature scenes, and white or colored light
- *Smell:* Nature (e.g., a forest)
- *Taste:* Blood
- *Mind:* Gnosis, Void, non-duality[64]

Because five of the study's participants were in the kundalini process, comparison questions were asked about the differences between their waking and lucid dreaming experiences of it. The energetic aspect of the experience was somatically felt by this group to be more refined and smooth in the lucid dreaming state. In conjunction with feeling it at a more refined "higher level of vibration" was a gnosis that kundalini was being experienced at a higher level of divinity.[65] Participants also reported feeling more fully immersed in kundalini while lucid dreaming. In addition, all of the participants' senses tended to perceive lucid dreaming kundalini in a heightened, more saturated way.

In many religious traditions, kundalini is emphasized as being feminine, while in manifestation she is found in everything.[66] The study's participants all reported a wide array of anthropomorphic, non-anthropomorphic, gendered, non-gendered, and impersonal manifestations. While the majority experienced kundalini as an impersonal force of energy, when it arose anthropomorphically, it mostly appeared as the feminine Divine. These and all other aspects of how kundalini manifested, such as various fundamental elements and aspects of nature, are listed in Table 12.1.

Many participants experienced kundalini morphing from one thing into another as the experience evolved or manifesting as multiple things

simultaneously. Some of the participants' accounts closely matched those described in Bogzaran's doctoral dissertation, *Images of the Lucid Mind: A Phenomenological Study of Lucid Dreaming and Modern Painting*, an interdisciplinary qualitative study that used phenomenological, narrative, artistic, and poetic approaches to analyze mystical light found in hypnogogia and lucid dreams. Bogzaran's findings, which she sometimes labeled as occurring in "hyperspace lucidity,"[67] are similar to Gillespie's descriptions[68]—and both coincided with the present study's descriptions of mystical light and the consciousness states where it can be found. Looking back over the sweep of these analyses, we can easily say that kundalini is an extremely complex, powerful phenomenon worthy of further study.

Table 12.1 Various Key Aggregated Lucid Dream Kundalini Phenomenological Aspects of All Thirteen Research Participants

The Divine Kundalini Manifesting as:	**Jane**	**Mary**	**Susan**	**David**	**John**	**Michael**	**Linda***	**Patricia***	**Robert***	**William***	**Richard***	**Thomas***	**Char**
Anthropomorphic													
Male								1					
Female				1	1			2					
Androgynous								2					
Non-anthropomorphic													
Personal				1									
Impersonal [energy]			3	2	2	3	1			1			1
Impersonal [nature]	1	1			1	1							
Impersonal element [earth]	1		1			3		1					
Impersonal element [water]			2			1		1	1				
Impersonal element [fire]				2				1	1				
Impersonal element [air]			1	1				1					
Impersonal element [ether-light]			1	3						1			
Impersonal [knowledge]		3		1		2		1					

| | | |

disrupting many pragmatic aspects of the dreamers' lives. In all of these cases, the people involved felt that they were better off psychologically and spiritually for having done the protocol, but the reader needs to be advised of these possibilities; I recommend having experienced spiritual guidance readily available both before and during the use of the protocol. To my knowledge, it appears to be gentler on the psyche than some circular breathing techniques and entheogenic (psychedelic drugs) use, but more quantitative research on a larger scale needs to be conducted with all three of these spiritual methods before anything more definitive can be said. All three hold the potential for triggering *spiritual emergency*. Stan and Christina Grof define spiritual emergency as follows:

> . . . crises when the process of growth and change becomes chaotic and overwhelming. Individuals experiencing such episodes may feel that their sense of identity is breaking down, that their old values no longer hold true, and that the very ground beneath their personal realities is radically shifting. In many cases, new realms of mystical and spiritual experience enter their lives suddenly and dramatically, resulting in fear and confusion. They may feel tremendous anxiety, have difficulty coping with their daily lives, jobs, and relationships, and may even fear for their own sanity.[69]

Two informal studies showed that the most frequent reason why people contacted the Spiritual Emergence Network for help from transpersonal psychotherapists and psychiatrists was from issues stemming from self-identified kundalini issues.[70] A spiritual emergence has many of these same attributes, but it lacks the elements of mental crisis—an ongoing emergence is a more likely consequence of the protocol's regular use.

The research findings show that kundalini has the capacity to be experienced both transcendently and immanently, as all gendered and non-gendered divine forms in dual, non-dual or meta-nondual fashion. This bodes well for those who realize this capacity within themselves, as they will perhaps be inspired to play a role in the ongoing religious reconciliation efforts that are so needed in our world today. The lucid dreaming protocol clearly has the potential to bring us into contact with what many consider to be the innermost aspects of the mind. In addition, the protocol may be modified so that those from any tradition can benefit, including atheists, who can direct the protocol to the core of their psyche, for example.[71]

I invite the interested reader to look at the original study referenced in the notes to this chapter for the study's further implications in the fields of dream

studies (mystical lucid dream work and its relationship to "root metaphors"), religious studies (the debate about the sources of mystical experiences), transpersonal psychology (how therapists can incorporate use of the protocol with their clients), and consciousness studies (how the kundalini lucid dreaming protocol can be used by researchers in as another way to explore the "hard problem" of consciousness—how and why we have our coherent experience of perception).[72]

Many other findings from the original study stand out in my mind, but I will limit myself here to mentioning a key point first made in Bogzaran's work—that within a short period of time, most people who can lucidly dream have the potential in short order to have experiences of their innermost selves that are consistently meaningful, inspiring, pragmatically useful, and potentially life-altering. This conclusion, in addition to being in line with my study's results, is reminiscent of my own childhood experience of dreaming the Divine—it is a natural, ultimately benevolent inner capacity. While many parts of Christianity (and parts of all exoteric aspects of the global traditions with which I am familiar) may still prove troubling or outdated to some in this postmodern age, passages like the following from the Bible can still ring true for a secular mystic or to someone from another tradition at the dawn of this integral-postmodern moment: "Whoever humbles himself and becomes like this child will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven . . ."[73] Indeed, it seems that all who approach ultimate or clear reality with child-like openness and wonder might benefit beyond what has been dreamed of in their own philosophies.

My own heuristic process over the last 10 years using lucid dreaming as a meditation protocol has shown me that I can communicate directly with kundalini, where it often has revealed knowledge about how to experience a relatively smooth unfolding process with it, pointing the way to being a more loving person in the world, while inwardly experiencing greater psychological wholeness. Kundalini became my teacher within, safely guiding me in my own inner development and creating a base of experiential knowledge so I can help others do the same with my spiritual counseling practice. Participation in the study, which included three-month and one-year follow-up interviews, showed that the use of the protocol helped facilitate a deeper sense of psycho-spiritual well-being in its participants.[74] I express my gratitude to them for their openness and years of patience as this work

unfolded.

Notes

1. Theodore Esser IV, *Lucid Dreaming Meditation: A Transpersonal Narrative Study of Consciousness and Ultimate Realities—Kundalini, the Divine, Nonduality* (Dissertation, Ann Arbor, MI: ProQuest/UMI, 2013).
2. The study's methodology was most influenced by the following:

   Overarching structure and philosophy: Rosemarie Anderson and William Braud, *Transforming Self and Others through Research*: *Transpersonal Research Methods and Skills for the Human Sciences and Humanities* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2011); John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998); John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003); John W. Creswell and Vicki L. Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2007).

   Narrative methodologies: Amia Lieblich, Rivka Tuval-Mashiach, and Tamar Zilber, *Narrative Research: Reading, Analysis, and Interpretation* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1998); Catherine Kohler Riessman, *Narrative Analysis* (Newberry Park, CA: Sage, 1993); Catherine Kohler Riessman, *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1993).
3. John Simpson, ed., "Lucid Dream, *a*," in *Oxford English Dictionary, Draft Additions March 2004: OED Online* (2004), December 1, 2006. http://oed.com.
4. While none of the participants reported having an out-of-body experience (OBE) during the study (or its phenomenological equivalent, depending on your view), it has been my experience that the study's protocol has the same results in OBEs as in lucid dreams.
5. John Rowan, *The Transpersonal: Psychology and Counseling* (London: Routledge, 1993).
6. Stuart Sovatsky, *Words from the Soul*: *Time, East/West Spirituality, and Psychotherapeutic Narrative* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998), 155.
7. Ibid., 7. As with the term "kundalini," the Sanskrit terms are being used because they are generally the most well known in the English-speaking world, not for reasons of preference to the traditions they come from.
8. Douglas Renfrew Brooks, *The Secret of the Three Cities: An Introduction to Hindu Sakta Tantrism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).
9. Bonnie Greenwell, *Energies of Transformation: A Guide to the Kundalini Process* (Saratoga, CA: Shakti River Press, 1995). Unfortunately, the phenomenon is so complex that it cannot be more fully explored in a work of this size.
10. David Lukoff, "Spiritual Emergency Type: Kundalini Awakening," *Spiritual Competency* (1988): 10. http://www.spiritualcompetency.com/blackboard/lessons/types/kundalinitype.htm.
11. Jorge Ferrer, *Revisioning Transpersonal Theory: A Participatory Vision of Human Spirituality* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002).
12. John A. Simpson, and Edmond S. Weiner, eds., "Divine, *a*. and *n*. 1," in *The Oxford English Dictionary,* 2nd ed.: *OED Online* (1989), December 1, 2006. http://www.oed.com/ Heidi I. Koppl, *Establishing Appearances as Divine* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Press, 2008).
13. David Loy, *Nonduality: A Study in Comparative Philosophy* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1988), 9.

14. Ibid., 9.
15. Mariana Caplan, *Halfway up the Mountain: The Error of Premature Claims to Enlightenment* (Prescott, AZ: Hohm Press, 1999).
16. John A. Simpson and Michael S. C. Proffitt, eds., "Kundalini," in *Oxford English Dictionary Addition Series: Vol. 3: OED Online* (1997), December 1, 2006.
17. The "transpersonal" is, "an approach to psychology that 1) studies phenomena beyond the ego as context for 2) an integrative/holistic psychology; this provides a framework for 3) understanding and cultivating human transformation. To be even more succinct, we can say that transpersonal psychology studies human transcendence, wholeness, and transformation"; Glenn Hartelius, Mariana Caplan, and Mary Anne Rardin, "Transpersonal Psychology: Defining the Past, Divining the Future," *Humanistic Psychologist* 35, no. 2 (2007): 11.
18. Fariba Bogzaran, *Experiencing the Divine in the Lucid Dream State* (Thesis, Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1990).
19. Ibid.
20. Ted Esser, *Narrative Research Pilot Study: Interacting with Awakened Kundalini in the Lucid Dreaming State* (Unpublished manuscript, San Francisco, CA, 2005).
21. Bogzaran, *Experiencing the Divine*.
22. The chair, Daniel Deslauriers, PhD, is an expert in dreaming from both psychological and scientific perspectives; the second reader, Jim Ryan, PhD, is an expert in Hindu tantra and kundalini from a religious studies perspective; the external reader is Bonnie Greenwell, PhD, a transpersonal psychotherapist and a well-known kundalini researcher. I was fortunate enough to consult with several imminent transpersonal psychologists for the study: David Lukoff, PhD, for participant analysis and spiritual emergence expertise during the psychological screening process; Stuart Sovatsky, PhD, kundalini research expert, helped psychologically screen the research participants for study safety; and Olga Louchakova, MD, PhD, kundalini research expert and medical doctor. Dr. Louchakova's advice was instrumental to ensure there were adequate safety measures undertaken in screening the research participants.
23. Clark Moustakas, *Heuristic Research* (Newberry Park, CA: Sage, 1990).
24. Patricia Garfield, *Pathway to Ecstasy: The Way of the Dream Mandala* (New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1979); Kenneth Kelzer, *The Sun and the Shadow: My Experiment with Lucid Dreaming* (Virginia Beach, VA: A.R.E. Press, 1987); George Gillespie, "Dream Light: Categories of Visual Experience During Lucid Dreaming," *Lucidity* 10, nos. 1–2 (1991): 25–27; Scott G. Sparrow, *Lucid Dreaming: Dawning of the Clear Light,* rev. ed. (Virginia Beach, VA: A.R.E. Press, 1982); Jane Gackenbach and Harry T. Hunt, "Lucid Dreaming as a Transpersonal (Meditational) State: A Potential Distinction from Dream-Work Methods," *Journal of Mental Imagery* 16, nos. 1–2 (1992): 97–102; Jane Gackenbach and Jane Bosveld, *Control Your Dreams: How Lucid Dreaming Can Help You Uncover Your Hidden Desires, Confront Your Hidden Fears, and Explore the Frontiers of Human Consciousness* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989); Anthony Shafton, *Dream Reader: Contemporary Approaches to the Understanding of Dreams* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995); Sivananda Radha, *Realities of the Dreaming Mind: The Practice of Dream Yoga* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1994); Fariba Bogzaran and Daniel Deslauriers, *Integral Dreaming: A Holistic Approach to Dreams* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2012); Bogzaran, *Experiencing the Divine*; Fariba Bogzaran, *Images of the Lucid Mind: A Phenomenological Study of Lucid Dreaming and Modern Painting* (Dissertation, Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1996); Kelly Bulkeley, *Spiritual Dreaming* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1995); Kelly Bulkeley, *Dreaming in the World's Religions: A Comparative History* (New York: New York University Press, 2008).
25. During the final phase of editing my study, I discovered Ryan Hurd's heuristic, phenomenological

self-study where he developed a method inspired in part by Bogzaran's study and successfully incubated void-like experiences in lucid dreams without kundalini or the Divine as a catalyst; Ryan D. Hurd, *Spontaneous Emergence: A Phenomenology of Lucid Dreaming* (Thesis, Pleasant Hill, CA: John F. Kennedy University, 2008). April 17, 2013. http://www.driccpe.org.uk/portfolio-view/spontaneous-emergence-a-phenomenology-of-lucid-dreaming.

26. Creswell and Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*.
27. Other research questions included the following: What was the narrative structure to the dreams with non-dual realization? What did the story and symbols of the dreams mean to the participants experiencing normal duality consciousness in the beginning of the dream, how did that change during non-dual perception, and finally how did it change again after duality consciousness resumed? How does kundalini fit into explaining the essential nature of their experiences? Do the experiences of kundalini, the Divine, and non-duality initiated in the lucid dreaming state cross over into waking life or do these experiences dissolve with the end of the dream? Which similarities and differences are expressed in the participants' stories of waking and lucid dreaming kundalini, divine, and non-duality experiences? Did participants' waking experience of kundalini change in any way compared to before the study? Have the research participants' beliefs about ultimate reality shifted as a result of their experiences? What are some of the major phenomenological components of kundalini and non-duality in the lucid dreaming state? How do they differ from the waking state? How do the research study conclusions contribute to transpersonal psychology, consciousness studies dream studies, and religious studies fields? So many questions! The next section describes how I went about answering some of them.
28. None of the five participants in this group were in the advanced stages of the process, but two were in an intermediate phase.
29. I noted a correlation between how far the kundalini process (or more open *pranic* flow) had unfolded in an individual and his or her average monthly lucidity rates. I recommend more research be conducted in this area to check this observation and perhaps employ the study's protocol to facilitate higher rates of lucidity.
30. Any reader interested in using the study protocol should be aware of the potential physical health risks associated with "kundalini syndrome." See the sources in notes 1, 10, and 15 for more details.
31. This did not precipitate a subsequent kundalini awakening of these two participants. However, use of the study's protocol did raise the frequency and degree of preexisting subtle energetic sensations and experiences with the group as a whole to varying degrees.
32. For a number of people, the process can also move in the direction of having increasingly longer and more intense mystical experiences and meditative absorption, coupled with the person believing that she has experienced complete or ultimate reality; Lee Sannella, *The Kundalini Experience: Psychosis or Transcendence* (Lower Lake, CA: Integral Publishing, 1987). "Ultimate reality" is also used pluralistically here. It is known in different religious traditions as experiencing the world, dreams, visions, or the Divine from a dual or non-dual perspective via experiencing or merging with the Divine, described as ultimate emptiness or fullness—or the concept is not considered whatsoever within a context of nirvana or "clear reality"; Robert Cummings Neville, ed., *Ultimate Realities* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001).
33. Bogzaran, *Experiencing the Divine*.
34. Esser, *Narrative Research Pilot Study*.
35. Bogzaran, *Experiencing the Divine*, 22.
36. Bogzaran, *Experiencing the Divine*, 20–21.

37. All participants' names are pseudonyms.
38. For length considerations, some of the dreams' details are abridged (indicated by ellipses). If participants did not announce when they became lucid or when they initiated the protocol in the initial dream account, I discovered these moments in subsequent questioning (indicated with brackets). If these moments were mentioned, I italicized them for emphasis. Curly brackets are used for inserting essential details when untold or forgotten aspects of the dreams were told or recalled during later questioning.
39. Esser, *Lucid Dreaming Meditation*, 203–207.
40. Specifically, a narrative, holistic-content, thematic analysis.
41. Montague Ullman, *The Variety of Dream Experience: Expanding Our Ways of Working with Dreams* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999).
42. Ullman, Ibid; Jeremy Taylor, *Where People Fly and Water Runs Uphill: Using Dreams to Tap the Wisdom of the Unconscious* (New York: Warner Books, 1993), 72.
43. This quote was edited so her thoughts about the dream are placed in the order of the dreaming events.
44. Ted Esser, *Lucid Dreaming Meditation*, 207–9.
45. The way the participants identified any of the apparent kundalini manifestations as kundalini in their lucid dreams was through experiencing a gnosis (a knowing with an extremely high degree of certainty—on par or greater than that arrived at from the five senses at the time of the event that it was so), coupled with a close proximity to the participant's lucid incubation of it;

    Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994).
46. Kelly D. Alley, "The Goddess Ganga: Her Power, Mythos, and Worldly Challenges," in *Goddesses in World Culture*, ed. Patricia Monaghan (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2011), 33–48.
47. Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Yogas of Dream and Sleep* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1998).
48. Mark Dyczkowski, *The Doctrine of Vibration: An Analysis of the Doctrines and Practices of Kashmir Shaivism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1987); Dean Radin, *The Conscious Universe: The Scientific Truth of Psychic Phenomena* (San Francisco: HarperEdge, 1997); Dean Radin, *Entangled Minds*: *Extrasensory Experiences in a Quantum Reality* (New York: Paraview & Pocket Books, 2006).
49. Specifically, a categorical-content narrative analysis method.
50. Esser, *Lucid Dreaming Meditation*, 297.
51. Esser, *Lucid Dreaming Meditation*, 378–379.
52. Greenwell, *Energies of Transformation*, 10, 33; Lee Sannella, *The Kundalini Experience: Psychosis or Transcendence* (Lower Lake, CA: Integral Publishing, 1987).
53. Specifically, a structural holistic-form group analysis.
54. Specifically, a categorical-form, group narrative analysis.
55. In addition to meaning and meta-meaning, some participants described aspects of their dreams as being athematic after kundalini was lucidly incubated (when it manifested with less power), just as one would not ascribe a theme to some of one's actions during the daytime as recounted in a diary.
56. Esser, *Lucid Dreaming Meditation*, 229–230.
57. Ibid., 306.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid.
60. Again, this was only one of many comparisons that could be made from a number of other

traditions; Venkatesananda, *Vasistha's Yoga* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993).

61. Specifically, a categorical, group phenomenological analysis. A phenomenological study of any kind has never been even retrospectively undertaken on how kundalini is experienced in the dreaming state, only during waking visionary and meditative states.
62. For the phenomenological procedures and analysis, I combined a variation of Moustakas's method with the categorical-content tables from Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber. The original analysis included kundalini-related dream objects, emotional/cognitive experiences, situational aspects, and various other transpersonal phenomenal manifestations; Clark Moustakas, *Phenomenological Research Methods* (Newberry Park, CA: Sage, 1994); Lieblich et al., *Narrative Research*.
63. Greenwell, *Energies of Transformation*; Sannella, *The Kundalini Experience*; Olga Louchakova and Arielle S. Warner, "Via Kundalini: Psychosomatic Excursions in Transpersonal Psychology," *Humanistic Psychologist* 31, nos. 2–3 (2003): 115–158.
64. Greenwell, *Energies of Transformation,* 314.
65. Ibid., 314.
66. Ibid., 64.
67. Bogzaran, *Images of the Lucid Mind*, 44.
68. Ibid., 44; Gillespie, "Dream Light."
69. S. Grof and C. Grof, *Spiritual Emergency: When Personal Transformation Becomes a Crisis* (Los Angeles, CA: Tarcher, 1989), back cover.
70. D. Lukoff, "The SEN Hotline: Results from a Telephone Survey," *SEN Newsletter,* March 1988; T. Esser, *SEN: A Short History and Client Analysis* (Research presentation, New Delhi, India: World Congress on Psychology and Spirituality, 2008).
71. The results of both Bogzaran's study and my own simply point toward the human subjective capacity for divine or divine-like experiences, not toward any definitive objective proof for any exoteric religious cosmology, ontology, or other concepts.
72. Kelly Bulkeley, *The Wilderness of Dreams: Exploring the Religious Meanings of Dreams in Modern Western Culture* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994).
73. Donald Coggan, "New Testament," in *The Revised English Bible* (Oxford/Cambridge, UK: Oxford University Press and Cambridge University Press, 1989), Matthew 18:3, 17.
74. This last issue, along with many others, is addressed in much greater detail in the 600-plus-page dissertation. I invite those interested to read that larger work, since it has much of related interest even to the nonspecialist.

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13

Lucid Dreaming and the Sufis: Conflicts and Opportunities in the Modern West

A. Muhammad Ma'ruf

Introduction

Mary Ziemer, a present-day dream specialist based in the United Kingdom who has developed her own "Lucid Surrender" orientation to dreaming has written: "Arabi's dreams and visions have served . . . to help me contextualize and consecrate the Reality of my own dreams."[1] We see here a clear connection of lucid dreaming to Sufism, as Ibn Arabii's name is historically synonymous with some schools of Sufism.[2] Sufism is mentioned very briefly in several other works on the history of lucid dreaming, referring to experiences similar to lucid dreaming in histories of Sufism and other Eastern traditions such as Tibetan Buddhism, Hinduism, and Taoism.[3] That history is invoked as an argument for the further development of lucid dreaming research and practice.

Lucid dreaming research pioneer Stephen LaBerge's works in the 1980s and 1990s are possibly a source for this historical hypothesis, which seems to be derived from Idries Shah (1924–1996), who is well known for publications on Sufism originally authored in English. More translations of the original sources that Idries Shah used in his public representation of Sufism have now become available.

Resonating Beyond Culture and Time

LaBerge has also written that an image he took to be that of Idries Shah was a character in one of his early lucid dreams. The image appeared as a lecturer in one of his dreams, with a comment about a sequence in the dream that had

just ended. The dream "inspired a permanent change" in the course of LaBerge's lucid dreaming studies.[4] Anthropologists have reported other instances of such dreams. One of these reports comes from Katherine Ewing, who studied Sufism in Pakistan. She has described how the Sufi informant with whom she was working told her that he would visit her in a dream—which he did. Ewing's extensive anthropological discussions of this experience have generated anthropology of dreaming commentary.[5] Gabriele Marranci recounts Ewing's account and also mentions "something similar" which he experienced during fieldwork in Northern Ireland.[6] The experience is related to a meeting he attended that was addressed by a Sufi from West Africa: "everyone present at the meeting had the impression that the Sufi had answered each of our questions personally, speaking differently to each of us, despite the fact that he delivered the talk to the assembly. Moreover, many of the youngest . . . myself included, received further teaching from the Sufi during our dreams, which continued for weeks." Such "transpersonal dreams" are a notable and intriguing aspect of Sufi dream lore.[7] The possibility of such thought transference via a dream has been fictionalized and popularized in the movie *Inception* (2010), although, as far as I know, without acknowledging any Sufi or anthropological sources.

Anthropological accounts of such dreams have not included descriptions of any lucid dreaming features. However, they raise a question: if the anthropologists who reported them were aware of and interested in lucid dreaming while they were doing their fieldwork, would they have described them as lucid dreams?

Personal Context

This chapter is based on the author's dreams, field and online research in Muslim and Sufi dreaming, and experience in informal dream interpretation. The field research included group and one-on-one discussions, held in various locations in the Philadelphia metropolitan area over several years.[8]

I have had an interest in my own and other people's dreams for most of my life and have actively engaged in research on dreams for several recent years. However, I did not have any dreams that I recognized or named as "lucid dreams" until after I began reading about and discussing lucid dreaming as part of that research. As such, I agree with Charles Laughlin's

observation that the recent "discovery" of lucid dreaming as a type describes the specialized dream researcher's new perspective and not necessarily the actual dreaming experiences of all, including non-Western, peoples.[9] The anthropologists mentioned previously were not looking for lucidity features in their fieldwork.

Defining Lucid Dreaming

In this chapter we take lucid dreaming, poetically described as a state "when in dreams we are awake," as referring to dreaming experiences in which we are aware of the drama of the dream as well as of our feelings, thoughts, and actions in it, while still asleep and with our eyelids closed. The quality of awareness in this state differs from the awareness we associate with being awake. It also differs from images and colors of which we may become aware when we are awake and keep our eyes closed. This preliminary definition is based on one of my very meaningful experiences that I have determined to be a lucid dream.

Silence in the Literature of Sufism

Although books and online articles mention a connection between Sufism and lucid dreaming, real-life Sufis who can discuss this topic in detail are not easy to come by. The Sufism literature, while quite voluminous about dreaming in general, is mostly silent about "conscious dreaming" as a different, named category. In my searches for Sufi thought and narratives of the experience of lucid dreaming, I was told that there are no publicly known present-day Sufi "experts" in this area. However, Sufis accept the possible value of this newly known Western practice. Hermansen has briefly discussed the adoption of lucid dreaming by some U.S.-based Sufi groups that she has researched.[10] "Western psychotherapeutic models and practices derived from Jungian or Gestalt schools provide bridges and techniques" in the Sufi dreamwork of these groups. Lucid dreaming is understood in these groups, Hermansen continues, "as an effective spiritual technique practiced in diverse esoteric paths." The centers of these groups are geographically outside the area of my investigations and were not part of my field studies. The search in published literature online as well as in books and periodicals, guided in part by names of premodern Sufis mentioned in the lucid dreaming

literature, yielded more substantial results that will be presented to the reader.

Sufism in Context

A brief introduction to Sufism is appropriate before we get to the selected texts. Sufism comprises a vast territory with numerous internal differences of language and terrain as well as much inconsistency and many contradictions. The academic specializations that have produced works on it are also many and diverse. It would be an error to approach "Sufism" as a single category, monolithic in regard to its history, organization, functions, and teachings.

Ethnography and cultural anthropology are among the disciplines that have supported Sufism studies. To date, most ethnographic studies of Sufism have focused on the "shrine culture" associated with the Muslim practice of visiting the tombs of well-known Sufis of the past.[11] These studies usually deal with the ceremonial aspects of visiting the shrines of Sufis. Typically such studies have not dealt with any role that visiting saints' shrines may have for studies of dreaming. Jonathan Katz's historical essay, however, mentions that such visits may be undertaken for dream incubation.[12] Fritz Meir has also mentioned *tawajjuh,* the Islamic mystic practice of meditating near a tomb.[13]

Mittermaier discusses how visits between the living and those in other worlds can happen in Egypt in both ways: either the dreamer visiting a tomb, or a living or believed to be dead "saint" or other person visiting the dreamer in a dream.[14] She also mentions that Egyptians used to sleep or nap in shrines more frequently in the past, so as to be visited by the "saint." "Frequently in such 'visitational dreams' those appearing to the dreamer not only make requests, but also give—and what the dreamer receives, besides the visit, is knowledge.[15] Mittermaier adds that today it is often forbidden to sleep in mosques.

Most Western dreamers seeking knowledge about Sufism are unfamiliar with this institution and the belief complex associated with it; likewise, they remain unaware of the intense controversies that have arisen regarding it among Muslims in modern times. Moreover, the shrine sites are not easily accessible to them. Western dreamers are more likely to be readers of books,

for instance, by Idries Shah. The career of Idries Shah has been a major factor in the diffusion of Sufi ideas in the Western world. His literary output during and after the 1950s was appreciated in the English-speaking world and was published before the arrival of many of the other Sufi teachers and orders who are now active in the United Kingdom, United States, and other Western countries.[16] The well-known psychologist of consciousness Robert Ornstein has also represented Shah in the United States for many years.

Many Sufi psychological ideas, with histories dating back to medieval times, have regerminated in Western thought in recent decades. Of these, Henry Corbin's formulation of a speculative philosophy and psychology of an "Imaginal Realm" is the most discussed—for example, in the work of depth psychologist James Hillman.[17] Corbin's contributions to this field arose from his studies in Shi'a Islamic thought in Iran. Fazlur Rahman has an alternative explanation and history of the "world of images" based on Sunni Islamic sources.[18]

John Lamoreaux's synthesis of the oneirological work of the physician-philosopher Ibn Siinaa is among the more recent contributions to knowledge of this kind of psychology from the Muslim past.[19] The sources and history of "Imaginal Realm" ideas are ancient. Sufis and other Muslims have developed this idea in centuries past. In present-day practice in dreamwork and more broadly in psychology, the "Imaginal Realm" concept has become part of entirely different discourses.[20] The history of those studies can be researched further as studies of intercultural borrowing and transformation.

Another kind of Sufi psychology has become known in the West in our times through Idries Shah's translations and adaptations of short and witty teaching stories. These works narrate fictional events illustrating the possibilities of a nonordinary perception of life. The nonordinariness of these tales, which may help a learner in unlearning established modes of thinking, invite comparison with some dreams that also follow a logic different from the logic of the awake mind. Shah's work is also notable for his recognition that the "infant soft sciences of psychology, sociology, and anthropology" would be "valuable" in the Western "re-examination of the human heritage in knowledge."[21]

The writings of Sufis in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish dating back to at least the ninth century, as well as recent works in English, represent an important human heritage of knowledge. Sufism has been studied as a

classical literary phenomenon, as great poetry, and as prose works on discipline and metaphysics in Western languages during the centuries of Western colonial occupation of Muslim lands. The literary output associated with Sufism arose in a social and political context marked by various social movements and swirling currents of opinion, debate, and polemics. Many studies of this premodern social, political, and religious history and its differences from the historical consciousness of our times, and particularly in Western lands where Sufism seems to have found a congenial home, are now available.[22] Dream science and interpretation texts and historical autobiographies in which dreams and visions are recounted are another part of this tradition of Sufi writings, but they have not received much attention in Sufism studies until very recently.

The history of Sufism has been reviewed as a dialectic with other kinds of theories of worship in Islam by Islamologist Fazlur Rahman.[23] In his interpretation, the first 200 years of the history of Islam generated the growth of an "inner rupture between Sufi practice and its implicit ideology on the one hand and the emerging orthodox system on the other." In the next century, "the central spiritual history of Islam" became "a continuous tension between these two streams and progressive attempts at integration and resolution of this tension." The original Islamic situation of the lifetime of the Prophet, "an undifferentiated nucleus," had expanded. With the expansion came new theses and antitheses that had to be synthesized. Rahman, a critic of Sufism, is well aware that the Sufi and anti-Sufi dialectic within Islam has remained central to the problems of historical Islam into modern times. According to him, in modern times Sufism has become "a separate quasi-religion." Rahman views the development of these "new religions" or sects with regret and has written about the need to reintegrate "the genuine inner life of the 'heart'—the basic élan of Sufism—into the Shari'ah."[24]

We know that such dialectics of schism and renewal also exist in other religious histories and traditions. Indeed, Jeremy Taylor describes this as an "archetypal pattern of religious protest and schism" evident in the histories of Islam and Christianity.[25] Moreover, as Taylor has pointed out, dream experiences have played an important role in the origins and fashioning of this pattern, perhaps universally.

Experiential Knowledge in Sufism

Fazlur Rahman's insights about the history of Sufism are of particular relevance to anthropologists and to dream studies enthusiasts in general due to his conceptions of experience and experiential knowledge.[26] The earliest data he provides for this characteristic in a specifically Sufi form are from the ninth century. During this era, personal experience that could be written up as a basis for knowing more about, questioning, and validating religious beliefs and teachings emerged as a significant genre in the dialogue and debates that Sufis engaged in with the orthodox. This approach was noted in Qur'an exegetical works, sometimes in defense of Sufi beliefs and practices as a separate category from the beliefs and practices of the orthodox, and sometimes as part of attempts to find ways of bridging the distances that had come about between Sufism and orthodoxy.[27] By the ninth century, Sufi writers had begun classifying "stages" of Sufi spiritual development aimed toward creating a system for standardizing and objectifying Sufi experiences.

Junayd of Baghdad (d. 911), a well-known Sufi, was a critic of this experientialism and subjected the Sufi claims to scrutiny in terms of both their inner experiences and their practices. He disallowed any objective validity to the Sufi "states." In spite of such rejections, however, during the 9th and 10th centuries Sufism developed a doctrine of "inner experiential knowledge," which was a means of opposing the "intellectual knowledge of theology."[28] This Sufi experientialism is prominent in the writings of al-Ghazaalii (d. 1111) after his conversion to Sufism.[29] Because of al-Ghazaalii's "philosophical language of remarkable clarity, incisiveness, and irresistible persuasiveness," his works became very important in directing the future course of religious discussion in Islam. His autobiography became an example of testing religious beliefs through the Sufi experientialist method for Sufis and Muslims of other schools of thought. Idries Shah reminded his audiences about this history: "One area where the East has an acknowledged start is in experiential religion, and particularly in the field known in the West as mysticism."[30]

Diversity and Ambiguity of Terms

Several articles in a recent anthology on dreams and visions in Islamic societies discuss the use of the word *waaqi'a* (pl. *waaqi'aat/vaaki'a*) in descriptions of "dreams" and "other forms of psychic "occurrences" or "episodes" and a wide "cluster of psychic and visionary phenomena" in Sufi

literature.[31] Felek describes the autobiographical writings of the Ottoman Sultan Muraad III (1546–1595), a Sufi who wrote up narratives of his dreams that were compiled into a book.[32] Felek notes that the monarch preferred *vaaki'a* to the terms *ruu'yaa* and *duus* that were more commonly used for "dream" in other books of that time. "Muraad the dream teller's consistent and insistent use of . . . *vaaki'a* . . . blurs the distinction between dream and reality."[33] The inner, psychic episodes that are being discussed may be natural states for which the experiencer needs an explanation that may need inventing. The experiences may also be generated by a theory, mythology, or other explanation for such inner events that exists among a people at a time in their history. In the history of Islam, both types of responses to such experiences have generated discussions that we would now categorize as being psychological.

Meier distinguishes *waaqi`a*, visual inspirational perception, from *ilhaam*, an auditory or intellectual inspiration, in Islamic history.[34] He also refers to the discipline of preparing oneself to receive inspirational messages and the distinctions made in Islamic literature between inspirations received in passive states such as sleeping and dreaming and inspirations received in active states such as concentration and meditation. In the 14th century, Ibn Khaldun distinguished between general kinds of "preparedness" to receive "inspirational" messages available to all human beings and special kinds of preparations.[35] Where lucid dreaming would be placed in a classification of experiences that included consideration of the Islamic and Sufi literature of the past is a vital question for future research.

In any case, the historical Sufi use of a term to describe what seem to be diverse inner psychic experiences simply as an "incident" or "episode" in the biography of an individual removes the difficulties of finding words in English that can represent the underlying psychology and ambiguities of the words for "dream" and "vision" in the Qur'an and Hadith. These ambiguities have influenced the attitudes and behavior of Islamic peoples. According to one of my Arabic-speaking interlocutors, the ambiguity in the sacred literature sources is perhaps deliberate.

In Sufi and Islamic discourses, the narration of the experiences of dreams and visions, particularly if they involve higher-level spiritual figures, can serve as an indication of an elevated rank for the narrator. It may also be met with critiques of the narratives and denial of the higher status claimed or

implied by the narrator. The relevance of such experiences to persons other than those who have them and speak or write about them often become stimuli for religious debate and dispute.

Historic Sufi Figures and the Question of Lucidity

We now move on to a consideration of seeming lucidity features in Sufi and related Islamic textual data from the past. We begin by attempting to answer this question: were there lucid dreamers in the Muslim past? To find the answer, we will examine some historical first-person accounts of dreaming and related experiences.

Ibn al-Arabii

Ibn al-Arabii lived during the latter part of the 12th century and early part of the 13th century. He was born in the Murcia region of the Iberian Peninsula during the heyday of the Ibero-Islamic civilization but visited many cities of the Arabic-speaking world of that time. His tomb is in Damascus in present-day Syria.

Ibn Arabii is commonly known as "Al-Shaykh al-Akbar"—the Greatest Master—among other Sufis. This soubriquet reflects not merely the quantity of his output, but also its depth and originality. James E. Royster introduces him as follows: "Few have shaped the development of Islamic spirituality as profoundly as Muhiyii al-Din Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn al-`Arabii . . . He is the author of perhaps 700 different works, principal among which are *al-Futuhaat al-Makkiya* (The Meccan Revelations), containing 560 chapters and a projected 17,000 pages in a forthcoming critical edition, and, his most influential work, *Fusuus al-Hikam* (Bezels of Wisdom), twenty-seven chapters setting forth the most essential teachings of as many prophets, the book itself having been revealed to Ibn al-`Arabii in a dream."[36] Ibn Arabii has readers from many different religious and intellectual traditions.

Readers of Ibn Arabii's works now, as in the past, report receiving dream messages from him. The well-known and highly respected Islamic studies professor Seyyed Hossain Nasr, when describing his travels in Lebanon in 1966 with Titus Burckhardt, mentions their visit with the "saintly" Yashrutii

Sufi woman, daughter of the founder of the Yashrutiyyah Order, Sayyidah Faatimah; she "recounted to us how it was impossible for her to choose a title for the famous Arabic work on Sufism *al-Rihlah ila`l-Haqq*, until she had seen Ibn `Arabii in a dream and received the title from him."[37] Ibn Arabii is known to have been a polemical writer and his writings have been, and continue to be, the subject of a great deal of debate and controversy.[38]

Among the translations of Ibn Arabii's works that have now become available is one that describes a dream.

> I entered Seville to see the scrupulous, righteous Shaykh Abu 'Imran b. Musa b. 'Imran al-Martuli, and I informed him about a matter which made him happy and which he took as good tidings. So he said to me: "May God give you good tidings of the Garden (of Paradise), as you have given me good tidings!" Not many days had gone by when I saw in a dream one of our companions, among those who had died, and I said to him: "How are you doing?" So he mentioned something good (regarding his own state), in the course of saying a great deal and telling a long story. Then he said to me: "God has already given me the good news that you are my companion in the Garden!" So I said to him: "This is (all taking place) in a dream. Give me a sign of (the truth of) what you are saying!" Then he replied: "Yes, tomorrow at the noon prayer the Sultan will send someone to look for you in order to imprison you. So watch out for yourself!" Then I woke up, and there was nothing at all to indicate anything like that (was about to happen). But when I was praying at noon, suddenly the request came from the Sultan. So I said (to myself): "The dream was right!" and I hid out for fifteen days, until that (royal) request was cancelled. Now this is (an example of) the spiritual blessing (baraka) of the petitionary prayers (du'a) of the righteous (the salihin).[39]

In this self-reported account, the dream is not only clearly lucid, as he recognizes he is dreaming and states so, but also closely intertwined with a relationship to images from the other world of the dead, as well as with ongoing activities in the life of the dreamer.

Here is another gem that should be of interest to all who have had waking "lucid dreams" containing unusual sensations. Translated by Jane Clark in an essay about Ibn Arabii and the Moroccan city of Fez as it is now, it is an account of a powerful vision of Ibn Arabii's "second attainment of the 'Abode of Light' ":

> I obtained this station in 593 (*circa* 1196 CE) at Fez, during the *'asr* (late afternoon) prayer at the al-Azhar Mosque in the 'Ayn al-Khail. It appeared to me in the form of a light that was if anything more visible than what was in front of me. Also, when I saw this light the status of the direction "behind" ceased for me. I no longer had a back or nape of a neck, and while the vision lasted I could no longer distinguish between different sides of myself. I was like a sphere; I was no longer aware of myself as having any "side" except as the result of a mental process—not an experienced reality.[40]

Even in translation, this is a remarkably realistic description of an extraordinary visionary experience. Some readers may have had such experiences and would be able to recognize it. However, to understand the Sufi meaning of such experiences, we need to get into some key Sufi concepts and terms. The Sufis would say that their interest in dreams and related experiences is not just for the sake of the dream and the dreaming experience, lucid or otherwise. Rather, it is part of the construction of a "ladder" method,[41] meaning the process of striving toward "greater proximity to God."[42] The dream or visionary experience is evaluated as part of a continuous life process in which the dream experience is one aspect the Sufi's journey. Along the "way" are various stations, or as the translator of the preceding passage puts it, various "abodes."

Chittick also mentions the great attention that Sufi authorities devoted to the "stations" (*maqaamaat*) of spiritual ascent on the path to God and the "states" (*ahwaal*) or psychological vagaries that spiritual travelers may experience in their attempt to pass through the stations."[43] The doctrine of the abodes, stages, or stations (*maqaamaat*) of the Sufi "itinerary" was originally stated in terms "borrowed on the whole from the Qur'an."[44] The theory of *haal* (plural of *ahwaal*), meaning "states" of mind or feeling, may be distinguished from the theory of *maqaam* (singular of *maqaamaat*), meaning "stations" or "abodes."[45] *Ahwaal*, derived from the Sufi literature, has been translated in many ways: in addition to "psychological vagaries," as "psychologico-gnostic states"[46] and as simply "spiritual states."[47] All translators agree, however, on the experiential meaning of *ahwaal* to the Sufi: "Sufis do not believe these things to be the goal of the spiritual aspirant, as spiritual arrival and reaching the Divine Presence are separate from the mere experience of spiritual states."[48] The Sufi way included awareness of *ahwaal*, "states" or "feelings" . . . "of one kind or another and of greater or less fixity."[49] Some discussions have emphasized the strangeness of the psychologies of such states.[50]

In the past, when Sufism was an influential and prestigious chosen way to live within the Islamic world, belief in such states of the process, and progress in the process of spiritual ascent, prevailed. Some Sufis could claim to have arrived at the highest state of achievement in the path of spiritual ascent. The stated goal of the "itinerary" of the Sufi then was said to be "the 'annihilation' of the human into the Divine attributes and qualities."[51] The

assumption of this annihilation and its claims on the part of some Sufis were supported by actions interpreted by peers and associates as miracles and special divine graces and favors (*karaamaat*).

Looking back at this history, it is possible to see how this culture could perhaps lead a seeker into traps of delusion and "tricks of the mind." We do not know if that outcome was always inevitable. Nevertheless, one of the conclusions of the Islamic modernists and reformers who sought to remove this element from the folk beliefs associated with Sufism was that the widespread acceptance of this element of Sufism weakened Muslim society and made Muslims vulnerable to a kind of mass hypnosis. Peter Brent, more open to the continuous efficacy of the Sufi path, has written more hopefully of "perfection" in this path as becoming "fully conscious," conscious of self and of its "unbreakable connection with the cosmic unity that, as it were, flows through" one who has achieved it.[52]

A comment that a pro-Sufi interlocutor made to me during a conversation that I had with him about dream interpretations in a South Jersey setting maybe relevant here. We were talking about a forum thread on the website for the International Association for the Study of Dreams, which discussed the various interpretations that a dream can have, all or many of which may be correct. He pointed out that the interpretation of the dream is not only about the dream, but also about the dreamer. "And the dreamer is on a journey."

The delineation of the stages and stations of the journey, where they are followed even now, differs for different Sufi paths. Where Sufism is practiced, the belief in the necessity of the Sufi following a prescribed path, with its own states and stages, is accepted.[53]

Ibn Khallikan

Ibn Khallikan (1211–1282) was born in Iraq, but lived and worked in Cairo, Egypt, and other cities in Iraq and Syria. He is buried in Damascus. Ibn Khallikan was a "lawyer, theologian, grammarian, and professional writer," albeit perhaps not so well known among the public in our times as Ibn Arabii. He is not usually described as a Sufi. However, historically Sufis have not minded incorporating various experiences into their lore if they are interesting and educational, such as the following account of a dream about a

literary discussion that details differences between authors.[54] As in the dream from Ibn Arabii, it is assumed to be possible to meet and talk with the image or spirit of someone who has long been dead, in a clear and coherent story-like sequence, and to role play with an image that the dreamer identifies as himself.

In this dream, which occurred while he was in Alexandria c. 1238, Ibn Khallikan meets al-Mubarrad, author of a book that he had been reading before he had the dream. Al-Mubarrad had been dead for 400 years at the time of Ibn Khallikan's dream.

> I had there al-Mubarrad's The Kaamil and The 'Iqd of Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi, and used to read them and had noticed a contradiction in The Kaamil of al Mubarrad's from something else that he had written in another book.
>
> A few nights after I had come upon the (contradictory) passage I saw in dream that I was in the college where I had been a student. And it was as though we had prayed the afternoon prayer in the place where prayers customarily took place. When I had finished my prayer I rose to go away but I saw at the rear of the place a person standing and praying. One of those present said to me, "That is al-Mubarrad."
>
> So I went to him and sat beside him, waiting until he finished. When he had finished, I saluted him and said, "I have just been reading your book, The Kaamil."
>
> He said to me, "Have you seen my book The Rawda?"
>
> "I said, "No." I hadn't seen it before that time.
>
> Then he said, "Come and I will show it to you."
>
> So I went with him, and he went up with me to his house, and we went in, and I saw in it a great many books. He sat in front of them, searching for it . . . Then he took out a volume and handed it over to me. I opened it and left it in my lap. Then I said, "They have got hold of something against you here."
>
> "What have they got hold of?"
>
> "You have accused Abuu Nuwaas of error in such and such a verse" and I quoted the verse to him.
>
> "Certainly," he said. "There is an error there."
>
> "No" I said, "he was right, and they say that you were wrong in blaming him."
>
> "How is that?" he asked. So I told him what Ibn `Abd Rabbihi, the author of The Iqd had said. On hearing it he bit the end of his forefinger and kept staring at me absent-mindedly as though confounded. Then I awoke from my dream and as I awoke he was still in that state.[55]

Macdonald noted that this type of dream account is "marvelously clear and coherent," and that among Muslims there are "individuals who dream rarely but then with extraordinary clearness and connection." He also mused that simply by having belief in dreams, it might be they "frequently attain to that clarity."[56] The "clear" and "coherent" adjectives and the descriptions of the dreamer's active role-playing in the dream suggest a similarity to what is

now described as lucid dreaming, even though the dreamer's awareness of the state is not explicitly mentioned.

Ibn Sawdakin

A Chisti website has published a helpful historical explanation of a principle of Sufi practice that Ibn Arabi had written about as *himmah (*also spelled as *hemma*).[57] The explanation is by Ismail Ibn Sawdakin, a close disciple of Ibn Arabii.

> The servant of God should use the power of his visionary concentration (*hemma*) in regard to his being present with God also during his sleep (*manaam*), so that he may control his imagination (*khayaal*) and may direct it by means of his intellect (*yosarreffohu be'aqlehi*), just like his control thereof while he is awake. When this being present with God becomes a reality for the servant of God and becomes his second nature, then he experiences the fruits thereof in the intermediate state (*barzakh*) and he will benefit greatly therefrom. That is why the servant should exert himself to be able to realize all of this as it will be very useful to him.[58]

This explanation of the exercise of *himmah* as "visionary concentration" seems to parallel some descriptions of what lucid dreamers are trying to achieve. However, with the average lucid dreamer, there is no stated intention of "being present with God." Lucid dreamers I have followed through their writings and in online discussions seem to assume that they are present with God (consciously or not); alternatively, they may be indifferent to the problems of that God-search in which Sufis and other Muslims are engaged. In general, the modern lucid dreamers seek to know more about themselves and the possibilities of dreaming. To some lucid dreamers, of course, such as Mary Ziemer, who was quoted at the beginning of this chapter, the seeking of being present with God is important.

The psychological possibilities of *himma* are briefly explored in Robert Moss's selection from the work of Henry Corbin, which Moss calls "the power and perception of the heart."[59] In addition to the basic and literal meaning of "desiring," to Moss *himma* can imply "meditating, conceiving, imagining" and "projecting." "*Himma* is the mode of creative imagination—charged by the deepest passion—that has the power to create objects and produce changes in the . . . world."

We should note that *himma* or *himmat* does not always mean the same thing in all present-day Sufi terminologies. According to a Mevlevi Sufi

glossary, the word means “strong spiritual determination and aspiration.” In Turkish Sufism, the concept has a secondary meaning of the spiritual grace and favor of the “saints” or related beings living or passed away.[60] This meaning, possibly derived from generations of experience, directs us toward the consideration of whether dreams, lucid or not, are the result of our own or another’s will and concentrated attention.

Conflicts between Sufism and Modern Lucid Dreaming

Lucid dreamers exploring Sufism are likely to have to deal with some differences of orientation and conflicts specifically between Western (Anglo-centric) and traditional Islamic worldviews. We turn our attention to those now.

Lifestyles and Worldviews

Some practitioners of lucid dreaming reportedly seek the Divine, quite deliberately, through their art. Some seek mystical experiences of “the transcendental reality” and claim to have achieved this goal. In this way the practice of lucid dreaming may become a substitute for knowledge about topics such as God, life after death, and so forth regarding which the Islamic Sufis have answers based on different sources.

The lucid dreaming interest in the modern West is associated with liberal attitudes about the use of hallucinogenic and narcotic substances as well as questions about and criticisms of it. Some Sufis would want to side with those who question and object to the use of such chemical aids. However, from Coon and others, we know that some Sufi groups also have included narcotics as part of their religious services.[61] We should also note that lucid dreaming is sometimes presented as an alternative to the use of narcotic substances.[62]

Group versus Individualist Learning

Sufism author William Chittick has noted: “Like other branches of Islamic

learning, Sufism has been passed down from master (typically called a shaykh) to disciple, and the chain of transmission (*silsilah*) leading back to the Prophet has been considered an important part of the master's credentials. His oral teachings give life to the articles of faith, and without his transmission, methodical performance of *dhikr* is considered invalid if not dangerous."[63] As such, the theory of transmission/teaching and teachers includes a kind of genealogy extending beyond the teacher with whom a disciple/student may interact. I have also been told personally about the possible dangers of the practice of *dhikr* picked up from a book, online, or other source, without the care and guidance of a more knowledgeable person.

Kabir Helminsky, a practicing Sufi and present-day leader, states this principle forthrightly in his Introduction to an essay on dream interpretation: "the initiatic lines of Sufism carry the energy of an enlightened state of mind from their source in Muhammad . . . One who has previously experienced this 'opening' can guide others toward this state and verify their attainment of it."[64] Brent also delves into this Sufi pedagogic principle. As such, a do-it-yourself approach characteristic of the U.S. way of life in many pursuits may be unwelcome in "traditionalist" Sufi systems.

However, Fazlur Rahman contradicts this assumption. He writes of the emergence of this feature as a later (10th to 11th centuries and subsequent) development in the history of Sufism. "Whereas during the first three centuries, seekers of the Sufi path displayed a striking independence of spirit, resourcefulness and creativity, later on a rigorous discipline was imposed and an absolutely unquestioning submission to the spiritual dictatorship of the Shaykh or the master."[65]This new doctrine, according to Rahman, was completely opposed to the spirit of orthodox Islam and even to early Sufi practice.

Some Sufi pedagogic systems avoid the problem of being bound to a "master" by cultivating a belief in a Teacher not known physically in waking life, but rather known from images seen in dreams and visions. The narrative source for one of the images and associated legends and folklore for such a Teacher, who may present himself to a seeker in unexpected and apparently miraculous ways, is an intriguing story related in the Qur'an about someone who was a teacher of the prophet Moses.[66] Yusuf Ali, commenting on this story, has noted that descriptions of the paradoxical action in this story are given in the Qur'an with the "greatest economy of words," inviting a search

for further meanings in readers' "own inner and outer experiences."[67] Muslim tradition and some Sufic systems have expanded on the master-teacher relationship imagery in the story.

Of course, not all Western thought leaders espouse complete individualism in regard to dreams. For example, in 1990 Stephen LaBerge and Howard Rheingold suggested, "If you are serious about pursuing your highest potential, we recommend that you find a guide or teacher who can speak to you in a language that you can understand."[68] Readers of Carl Jung have been introduced to his learning about a widespread folk exegetical representation of that teacher figure from his Somali companions during his African travels (1925–1926). Battye offers a detailed and critical study of Jung's relationship to this figure, "Khidr," equated by some with the teacher of Moses in the Qur'an story, as well as of the conflicts between Freud and Jung and other issues in psychoanalytic theory.[69] In Jung's interpretation, Moses accepted al-Khidr "as a higher consciousness and looks up to him for instruction." For Jung, "Khidr was the prophet of dreams" and appeared to him in various appearances, including once as "the Old Man," one of the images spoken of in Muslim Khidr lore. In one of Jung's dreams, "he was a very venerable looking, very old man with white locks and a long flowing white beard . . . I knew him very well: he was my 'guru' . . ." Jung continues, "It was he who taught me psychic objectivity, the reality of the psyche . . ."[70] This mode of understanding of al-Khidr—"that undying wandering saint, the most picturesque figure in Muslim mythology, who journeys through the earth, rescuing, guiding, counseling"[71]—is characteristic of some Sufi paths.[72]

Scholar Meenakshi Khanna has studied in detail another belief complex that subverts the spiritual authority structure of the *silsilah* (initiatic genealogy), with a technique that accepts and privileges dreams and visions of nonliving teachers. As Khanna has explained, this different pedagogy is based on the Uwaysii technique, which refers to the principle contained in the story of Uways al-Qaranii, a contemporary of the Prophet Muhammad who never met him, but who communicated with him "through telepathic means," becoming deeply devoted to Muhammad. Later Sufis who were initiated by the spirits of Muhammad or of pre-Islamic prophets, or by the spirits of "the Sufi saints" of the past, were known as Uwaisiis. This spiritual method was marked by the absence of a physically present master. Initiation and

instruction occurred through visionary means. Uwaysii groups who have no need for a living shaykh have been known from the time of Fariiduddeen `Attaar of the 13th century. Descriptions and elaborations of that kind of pedagogy are found in later Sufi works up to the 17th century, when the activities of the Shahjahaanaabaad (India) group studied by Khanna were recorded. Uwaisiis are well represented in contemporary U.S. Sufi practice.[73]

The Jinn and Satan

The Sufi belief in the necessity of a living shaykh and participation in group disciplines, where it prevails, is related to another set of beliefs about Jinns. These entities may enter a novice's mind and activities while that individual is pursuing spiritual experimentation, become uncontrollable, and seek to dominate, mislead, or confuse a learner. This potential problem was pointed out to me during my fieldwork in South Jersey more than once. I was once told that some of the available foreign-language Muslim websites featuring lucid dreaming appear to be under the influence of Jinns. As such, my interlocutor did not want to examine or represent them.

These responses arise from beliefs that are widely held among Muslims, stated as follows in a teaching of a 12th-century Sufi Qur'an exegete Shams al-Diin al-Daylami: "in terms of mystical states (*ahwaal*) Satan and the Jinn may endanger the mystic. For this reason, madness may have either an angelic or demonic point of origin. The Sufi masters can cure the madness of these individuals, rather than physicians."[74]

Such observations raise questions about what or who the Jinn are. A new genre of paranormal phenomenology publications produced in the West includes descriptions about Jinn beliefs that may be becoming more common in Western cultures. These works are generally translations from Islamic sources. Robert Lebling's 2010 work is useful, although it—like other documents on the subject produced in the genre of paranormal psychology—contains some questionable assertions.[75]

Macdonald's 1909 treatise is an early, perceptive, academic Western work dealing with Muslim beliefs about the "appearance of the Jinn" considered in combination with diviners, dreams, Khidr, magic, prophets, saints, Sufis, talismans, and Ibliis (the last is equivalent to "Devil" in English).[76] In it, Macdonald interprets selections from significant premodern

Islamic literature about such phenomena as evidence for widespread Muslim belief in the "occult." He places such beliefs within a view of what he terms the Muslim religious "attitude," which in his thought is comparable to belief in the "unseen order" as in William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience.* Macdonald finds that methodologically, "it was necessary . . . to turn not to our metaphysical systems or to our religious philosophy, but rather to what we call commonly . . . the occult. These analogies, therefore, had to be sought chiefly in the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* and similar publications."[77]

Ibn Khaldun and al-Ghazzaalii—the sources on whom Macdonald mostly relied—were not at all involved with "occult" and paranormal phenomena. As such, there is some confusion in Macdonald's analogical translation. Macdonald was possibly correct in his assumption that there has been a lot of interest and openness toward paranormal and unexplained phenomena, miracles, and so forth among the Muslim masses. Suffice it here to point out that this kind of perception of Sufism and dream lore in Islam, slanted toward the magical rather than the philosophical and scientific psychological, is there in Macdonald's work of the early 20th century.

The Jinn are believed to be subtle beings. They can enter the human mind in imperceptible ways. Dreams and visions or hallucinations may also be an avenue through which they seek to influence and play with humans. The Jinn, like human beings, are believed to have consciousness and will, and to be able to make choices.[78] Belief in Jinns (or genies) is common in all parts of the Muslim world. Muslims, in general, believe that the world we live in has knowable and unknowable dimensions; the Jinn are part of those unknown and hidden worlds. Although the Jinn are categorically separate from humanity, like humans they can range from the saintly to the demonic. They live in a parallel universe, invisible to human beings, but are able to see human beings.

In contemporary circles, there is some talk in informal U.S. Muslim conversations about Jinns. This type of discussion has practical implications for personal behavior, worldview, and lifestyles, and the topic sometimes provides the background for lifestyle conflicts. I have noticed that people tend to lower their voices when mentioning this subject. It is to be expected that specialists in Muslim communities who practice Jinn exorcisms may be encountered in the United States, United Kingdom, and other Western

cultural milieus where increasing numbers of Muslims are finding a home now.

In 2010, Tahir Shah, a son of Idries Shah, provided an experiential account of some Jinns who were occupants of a house he purchased in Casablanca, Morocco. He and his family could not live in the house until it had been exorcised. From his essay, we may surmise that the Jinn, who are believed to possess human beings and thereby cause disorders of various sorts, also inhabit houses and other physical spaces invisibly. This is relevant in considering dream incubation techniques. Where one sleeps, along with the other nonhuman spirits or energies who dominate the environment in which the incubation takes place, may have an effect on the incubated dream.

Anthropologist El-Sayed al-Aswad describes beliefs about the Jinn and angels in the hidden and invisible worlds of a present-day Egyptian village. These beings are part of the everyday cosmos.[79] Lana Nasser explains beliefs about the Jinn from a different perspective, even suggesting that they may help in the human exploration of dream worlds.[80] More typically, behavioral disorders are traditionally attributed to intrusions from the kingdoms of Jinns. For example, one Sufi blog has a list of "15 signs of Jinn possession" as well as many posts seeking help from the site for problems believed to be caused by evil Jinns.[81] Among the "signs" are conditions described by psychologists as nightmares, sleep paralysis, and other sleep disorders. The advice given in the site is generally of a religious nature. The author does not acknowledge modern Western medical, psychological, and other experiential research and publications about these subjects. However, one poster suggests that the problems discussed may have psychological or medical causes and recommends that afflicted individuals should seek professional help from those specializations. That point of view is exceptional and indicates a conflict between licensed psychologists and typical traditional Muslim beliefs about Jinn possession.

Modern Western approaches to dream studies have begun with a systematic rejection of "supernatural" influences such as the Supreme Oneirologist, angels, Jinn, and other spirits as possible causes of human dreaming behavior in its "normal" and "abnormal" functioning.[82] It would seem that that there is a wide gap between attitudes and beliefs prevalent among traditional Muslims who have reservations about modern psychology-based interventions in situations of inner-life conflicts and other Muslims,

who are not a large proportion of the overall population, who are open to approaches based on Western psychological assumptions and beliefs about behavior and behavioral disorders.

Hadith Interpretation and the Psychology of Fear

The most important question and challenge presented by lucid dreaming research for Islamic and Sufi dream theory arises from what lucid dreaming research has shown about the experience of nightmares. Nightmares are quite commonly translated and dealt with in Muslim dream interpretation and counseling as threats sent by Satan. Nevertheless, recent psychological dream researchers focusing on lucid dreaming have described techniques for negotiating the threatening dream; the dreamer can learn to confront and overcome the nightmare. This and the discoveries about different ways in which different individuals react to fear in real life as well as in dreams have emerged as new questions for further discussion, research, and clarification of the Prophetic saying that is the basis of this widely held Muslim and Sufi belief. The belief is summarized succinctly: "There are three kinds of dreams —dictation of the soul, dictation from Allah and the angels and dictation from the devil."[83] It is reported in different wordings in a number of Islamic sources[84] and also in texts from other religions.[85]

Conclusion

All of these challenges can be studied in further detail in present-day Western and English-speaking behavioral contexts. Answers and techniques that do not negate the basic principles of Islamic practice can be found if sufficient resources can be applied. Several post-2009 online sites, which can be located by searching for "lucid dreaming Muslims" on the Internet, indicate that a growing number of Muslims are among those who are becoming introduced to and responding positively to the new Western practice of lucid dreaming.

The positive response fits the pattern noted by John Lamoreaux—namely, that even during the early centuries of Islamic expansion, the Muslim discourse on dreams absorbed local knowledge traditions from earlier

centuries while at the same time transmitting new traditions derived from its sources and experience. There are no philosophical reasons for present-day Muslim scholars to ignore dreaming in general or the specialized lucid dreamers' discoveries and approaches. However, it is likely that, as the Muslim response develops, it will take on other issues relevant in broader interfaith discussions.

Notes

1. Mary Ziemer, "Personal Dream Guidance and Ibn Arabi," Lucid Dream Alchemy, 2010. http://www.luciddreamalchemy.com/images/resources/lda_personal-dream-guidance_1.pdf. Accessed November 11, 2013.
2. This essay contains Arabic and other foreign-language origin proper names, words, and expressions, including in quotations, from multiple sources. In transliterating the borrowed terms, I have kept the spellings in the sources when possible, and sometimes made up my own spellings as needed. The reader should not look for consistency in transliteration.
3. Ryan Hurd, "History of Lucid Dreaming: Ancient India to the Enlightenment," 2008. http://dreamstudies.org/history-of-lucid-dreaming-ancient-india-to-the-enlightenment; Phyllis Koch-Sheras and Amy Lemley, *The Dream Sourcebook* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1995); Stephen LaBerge and Howard Rheingold, *Exploring the World of Lucid Dreaming* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1990).
4. LaBerge and Rheingold, *Exploring the World of Lucid Dreaming*, 231.
5. Katherine Ewing, "Dreams from a Saint: Anthropological Atheism and the Temptation to Believe," *American Anthropologist* 96, no. 3 (1994): 571–583; Charles D. Laughlin, *Communing with the Gods: Consciousness, Culture, and the Dreaming Brain* (Brisbane, Australia: Daily Grail Publishing, 2011), 218, 364–365.
6. Gabriele Marranci, *The Anthropology of Islam* (Oxford, UK: Berg, 2008), 77.
7. Laughlin, *Communing with the Gods*, 359–390.
8. The support of all consultants who have helped in gathering data for this chapter, and of reviewers in the Logan Township Writers Group meetings in which portions of this writing have been previously presented and discussed, is gratefully acknowledged.
9. Laughlin, *Communing with the Gods*, 133.
10. Many Sufi orders have been active in the United States, United Kingdom, and other Western countries for several decades. The open inclusiveness and the aesthetic dimensions of the great Sufi philosophies have now been adopted as answers to the spiritual searches of many Westerners. Except for the groups included in Hermansen's study, a Naqshbandi dream interpretation site, and Hixon (1989), the publications of most of the other groups have not paid attention to dreaming in their publications. Marcia Hermansen, "Dreams and Dreaming in Islam," in *Dreams: A Reader on the Religious, Cultural, and Psychological Dimensions of Dreaming,* ed. Kelly Bulkeley (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 84–85; Carl W. Ernst, "Between Orientalism and Fundamentalism: Problematizing the Teaching of Sufism," n.d. http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com. Accessed August 18, 2013; Lex Hixon, "Dreams and Sufism," 1989. http://www.alternativeradio.org/collections/spk_lex-hixon. Accessed August 18, 2013; John Voll,

"Sufi Orders," n.d. http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com. Accessed August 18, 2013.

11. Farida Pirani, " 'Therapeutic Encounters' at a Muslim Shrine in Pakistan: An Ethnographic Study of Understandings and Explanations of Ill-Health and Help-Seeking among Attendees," 2009. https://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/3338/1/FARIDA_PIRANI.pdf. Accessed August 18, 2013; Kazuo Ohtsuko, "Sufism," n.d. http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com. Accessed August 18, 2013.
12. Jonathan G. Katz, "Dreams and Their Interpretation in Sufi Thought and Practice," in *Dreams and Visions in Islamic Societies*, eds. Ozgen Felek and Alexander Knysh (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2012), 190.
13. Fritz Meir, "Some Aspects of Inspiration by Demons in Islam," in *The Dream and Human Societies*, eds. Gustav Von Grunebaum and Roger Caillois (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1966), 422.
14. "An intermediary realm, an isthmus; in the Qur'an, the dividing line between fresh and salt water, as well as the thin path that lies between paradise and hell; in everyday language generally the space in which the spirits of the dead dwell until Judgment Day; in Sufi discourses the in-between of the imaginary world, the space in which encounters with the Prophet happens"; Amira Mittermaier, *Dreams That Matter: Egyptian Landscapes of the Imagination* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), 140–172, 265.
15. Mittermaier, *Dreams That Matter*, 151.
16. Most of these orders are listed in http://islam.uga.edu/sufismwest.html and grouped under categories of "Islamic," "Quasi-Islamic," "Non-Islamic," and "Organizations or Schools Related to Sufism or Sufi Orders."
17. James Hillman, *Re-visioning Psychology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975).
18. Fazlur Rahman, "Dream, Imagination, and *`Aalam al-mithal*," in *The Dream and Human Societies*, eds. G. E. Von Grunebaum and Roger Caillois (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1966), 409–420.
19. John Lamoreaux, *The Early Muslim Tradition of Dream Interpretation* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2002), 69–76, 980–1037.
20. A strong case for anthropologists to consider the value of this concept in ethnographic studies of dreaming is made in Mittermaier, *Dreams That Matter*, 140–172, 265.
21. Idries Shah, ed., *The World of the Sufi* (London: Octagon Press, 1979), 282–283.
22. See, for instance, the chapter by Peter Brent, "The Classical Masters," in *The World of the Sufi,* ed. Idries Shah (London: Octagon Press, 1979), 7–31; the articles by William Chittick, Carl Ernst, John Voll, Kazuo Ohtsuka, and others on the Oxford Islamic Studies website, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/; Caravan Carleton Coon, *The Story of the Middle-East* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1958), 86–141; Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (New York: Anchor Books, 1968), xv–xxvi, 153–202; Ozgen Felek and Alexander Knysh, eds., *Dreams and Visions in Islamic Societies* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2012), six chapters of which are devoted to Sufi dreams and visions. Duncan B. Macdonald, *The Religious Attitude and Life in Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1909), is useful for understanding the Western meaning world, including the psychological perspective from which the Islamic dream culture legacy was viewed in the early 20th century.
23. Rahman, *Islam*, 160–161.
24. Ibid., 294–315.
25. Jeremy Taylor, "The Ambiguities of Privilege," in *Dreaming in Christianity and Islam*, eds. Kelly Bulkeley, Kate Adams, and Patricia Davis (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers, 2009), 242–243.
26. Rahman, *Islam*, 153–154, 161–162, 166, 168–169.
27. Elizabeth R. Alexandrin, "Witnessing the Lights of the Heavenly Dominion: Dreams, Visions and

the Mystical Exegeses of Shams al- Diin al-Daylami," in *Dreams and Visions in Islamic Societies,* eds. Ozgen Felek and Alexander Knysh (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2012), 215–232.

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29. Felek and Knysh, *Dreams and Visions in Islamic Societies,* 2012.
30. Shah, *The World of the Sufi*, 284.
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38. Rahman, *Islam*, 169–178.
39. "Some Dreams of Ibn `Araby." http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articlespdf/sp_dreams.pdf:3.
40. Jane Clark, "Ibn 'Arabi in Fez, a Holy City." http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/fez.html.
41. Macdonald, *The Religious Attitude and Life in Islam*, 167.
42. Idries Shah, *The Elephant in the Dark: Christianity, Islam, and the Sufis* (London: Octagon Press, 1978), 44–49.
43. William Chittick, "Sufism," n.d. http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/. Accessed August 18, 2013.
44. Rahman, *Islam*, 162.
45. Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah* (Vol. 3: 39–40, 77–79) explains these terms as they applied to Sufi as well as non-Sufi ethics and psychology. The stations were seen as not only perceptual moments, but also ethical qualities. The modern study of "experiential epochs" and related states in psychology and anthropology seems comparable but attention in these fields seems limited to perceptual, consciousness, and brain activity aspects; Laughlin, *Communing with the Gods,* 115.
46. Rahman, *Islam*, 162.
47. Khanna Meenakshi, "The Visionaries of a Tariiqa: The Uwaysii Sufis of Shahjahaanaabaad," in *Dreams and Visions in Islamic Societies,* eds. Ozgen Felek and Alexander Knysh (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2012), 130.
48. Ibid.
49. Macdonald, *The Religious Attitude and Life in Islam*, 167, 188.
50. Peter Brent, "The Classical Masters," 13.
51. Rahman, *Islam*, 163.
52. Peter Brent, "Learning and Teaching," in *The World of the Sufi,* ed. Idries Shah (London: Octagon Press, 1979), 221–222.

53. Mittermaier, *Dreams That Matter*, 92, 253n15.
54. Adapted and revised from a translation by Baron de Slane (1801–1878) of an account from the "Biographical Dictionary of Ibn Khallikan," reproduced in Macdonald, *The Religious Attitude and Life in Islam*, 84–85.
55. MacDonald, *The Religious Attitude and Life in Islam*, 84–85.
56. Ibid., 83–84.
57. http://www.chishti.ru/d_sufism_dreams.htm. At present, this may be the only Sufi online publication in which the expression "lucid dreaming" is used. Celal Emanet's help in suggesting this site is gratefully acknowledged.
58. More biographical information about Ibn Sawdakin is available at http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/infopdf/miasnewsletter22.pdf.
59. Robert Moss, *The Secret History of Dreaming* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2009), 80.
60. http://www.dar-al-masnavi.org/mevlevi-glossary.html; "Mevlevi Terms and Definitions" by Ibrahim Gamard (December 2002; improved and expanded, August 2009).
61. Coon, *The Story of the Middle-East*, 132; Dale F. Eickelman, *The Middle East and Central Asia: An Anthropological Approach,* 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998): 277.
62. Ryan Hurd, "The Prehistory of Lucid Dreaming," Dream Studies Portal, 2008. http://dreamstudies.org/articles/the-prehistory-of-lucid-dreaming.
63. The literal meaning of the Arabic *dhikr* (also spelt *zikr)* refers to mention, recitation, and remembrance. In Sufi practice, it refers to the rhythmic repetition of a name of God, or other formula, in a periodic ceremonial gathering. The formulas and methods of performance are different for different Sufi orders, and are taught often in combination with a kind of theory of breathing as a means of attaining ecstatic experience. The Naqshbandī Sufis are said to have a different technique of silent *dhikr* that can be practiced while one is engaged in one's day-to-day activities. All these practices are separate from, and usually in addition to, the forms of worship universally associated with Islam. See Coon, *The Story of the Middle-East*, 129–132.
64. Brent, "Learning and Teaching," 221–222.
65. Rahman, *Islam*, 164.
66. Mohammed M. Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran* (Mentor edition) (New York: New American Library, 1953), 61–83.
67. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur`an* [Text, translation and commentary] (Jeddah: Islamic Education Centre, 1946), 751, n. 2421.
68. LaBerge and Rheingold, *Exploring the World of Lucid Dreaming*, 289.
69. Nicholas Battye, "Khidr in the Opus of Jung: The Teaching of Surrender," in *Jung and the Monotheisms: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. Joel Ryce-Menuhin (New York: Routledge, 1994), 166–191.
70. Ibid., 178–179.
71. Macdonald, *The Religious Attitude and Life in Islam*, 26.
72. Mittermaier, *Dreams That Matter*, 122–123.
73. Meenakshi, "The Visionaries of a Tariiqa," 273–296.
74. Alexandrin, "Witnessing the Lights," 225.
75. Robert Lebling, *Legends of the Fire Spirits: Jinn and Genies from Arabia to Zanzibar* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2010).
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77. Macdonald, *The Religious Attitude and Life in Islam*, vii.
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82. "Supreme Oneirologist" adapted from Coon, who refers to a "Supreme Geographer"; Coon, *The Story of the Middle-East*, 19.
83. Muḥammad ibn ʻAbd Allāh al-Khaṫib al-Tibrīzī and Fazlul Karim, *An English Translation and Commentary of Mishkat-ul-Masabih.* Book II (Lahore: Book House, 1938), 101.
84. Mittermaier, *Dreams That Matter*, 6.
85. "I told them, except they could distinguish between dream and dream, they would confound all together; for there were three sorts of dreams; multitude of business sometimes caused dreams, and there were whisperings of Satan in man in the night season; and there were speakings of God to man in dreams . . ."; George Fox (1624–1691).

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14

A Pilgrimage into Dreamless Sleep

George Gillespie

I began to have lucid dreams spontaneously in 1975 while my wife, Charlotte, and I were American Baptist missionaries teaching at a theological college in Jorhat, a town in northeast India. At the college I taught the history of religions—including Hinduism, Buddhism, and modern religious movements of India—along with some biblical and a few other courses. I had never heard of dreams in which the dreamer knew that the experience was a dream and yet continued to dream.[1]

When I began having lucid dreams, they meant nothing to me in a religious or spiritual way. I did not suspect that I was at the beginning of a journey that would change the direction of my life, nor could I suspect that this sojourn would eventually become a spiritual journey.

I saw such dreams as an opportunity to study the nature of dreaming. I began to plan experiments while awake that I tried to carry out when I knew I was dreaming. About half the time, when I discovered that I was dreaming, I could remember what I had planned to do. I tested the solidity of dream objects first by feeling them as I feel things when I am awake and then by putting my hand through them. I could do both, as I wished. I planned ahead a dream story to see whether I could carry it through when I knew I was dreaming. I eventually did carry it through, although it also had surprises. Often I tried to remember where I was in bed asleep, but I never could. To test my mental ability, I tried to put into alphabetical order all that I saw in the dream. This was surprisingly easy. For the first five or six years of frequent lucid dreams, this was the direction of my thinking, and the kinds of things I tested.

Dreamless Sleep

After our return from India in 1979, I was studying again the Hindu philosophical concept of the states of consciousness. The discussions of consciousness are described in the sacred texts known as the *Upanishads*, the earliest of which is dated long before the birth of Christ. I was familiar with these discussions from my teaching of Hinduism at the college and from my personal reading.

In the *Upanishads*, we find mention of the four states of consciousness—being awake, dreaming, dreamless sleep, and ultimate reality. In the waking state, consciousness is directed outward to the world that is common to all of us—a condition described as a state of delusion and ignorance. In the second state, dreaming, our consciousness is directed inward, feeding on memories. Dreaming is superior to being awake because awareness of the body and of the world are transcended. Nevertheless, the dream state is still unsatisfactory, for forms in a dream may still delude the dreamer. Suffering and change also continue in the dream state.

In the third state, dreamless sleep, the person asleep desires no desire and dreams no dreams. In dreamless sleep, although there is union with what is ultimately real (known as *brahman*), the person asleep knows nothing and the union is temporary. There are different interpretations of dreamless sleep. Some schools of Hinduism (including Vedanta) believe that dreamless sleep is the experience of pure objectless consciousness.

In the fourth state, ultimate reality (*brahman*) is fully realized. The person experiencing this state is aware and knows pure consciousness.

The *Upanishads* were produced by a variety of sages, seers, and mystics, all of whom strained the bounds of language to describe the experience of dreamless sleep. In the *Prashna Upanishad* (4.6), there is a verse that can be translated as "When [the one asleep] is overcome with light, he sees then no dreams. There is this happiness then within the body." However, in this verse the word for "light," *tejas*, can also be translated as "brilliance," "power," "heat," or "glory." We cannot be sure from any of these texts what exactly this experience may be like.

I was curious about dreamless sleep. Just as I had tested the solidity of objects in lucid dreams or tried to guess where I was asleep, I wondered whether I could eliminate all the elements of a dream while dreaming and remain asleep. Could I, in fact, create dreamless sleep while lucid and be aware of the experience?

The Bible teaches little about comparative states of consciousness, at least while living. I took the Upanishadic description of the four states seriously, as testimony by ancient seers who have experimented with consciousness. I saw that a serious consideration of the Upanishadic texts leaves room for varying Hindu or Christian interpretations.

Soon I made my first attempt to eliminate dreaming while asleep:

I was at a restaurant table with my wife, Charlotte, and realized I was dreaming. I remembered what I was to do. I closed my eyes and saw darkness. Thus my visual imagery was removed. My body experience remained the same—as though I was sitting in a chair in a restaurant, with my feet on the floor and leaning on the table with my eyes closed. I pushed the table away to eliminate awareness of it. Then I raised my feet off the floor. I was still aware of my body and of the chair holding me up. I was not confident enough to push away the chair from under me. I did manage to will it away. I remained leaning back with my legs raised and began to float. Then I began to spin. Then Charlotte came along and said that she thought we should leave. So I got up out of the chair and we left the restaurant.

Light

Thereafter, eliminating what I saw by simply closing my (dreamed) eyes was always easy. Eliminating body experience remained the real challenge. A couple of months after I started the dreamless sleep experiment, something new happened. This was in January 1981:

I wanted to show people a high jump. When I jumped up, I saw the top of my house rise with me. So I knew I was dreaming. I descended and then began to fall. I believed by now that I could fall in a dream without fear. When I decided to stop falling, I straightened up and was then back on the ground. Then I started to fly again.

I remembered to close my (dreamed) eyes to eliminate visual imagery. I floated and gathered my knees into my arms. I did not remember to do anything further on the dreamless sleep experiment. Then, although I had closed my eyes, I saw an intense white light on the periphery of my vision to my left and remembered that an appearance of light did not necessarily mean that a light in my bedroom was waking me up (as I had thought in earlier dreams). Then the light increased. Intense light surrounded me and I floated in light. I began to contemplate prayerfully what I was doing and might see. I spontaneously called "Father," meaning God, and remained for some time like this and then woke up.

When I wrote this dream down afterward, I did not see any relationship between my experiments with dreamless sleep and the appearance of light. I did note two breakthroughs. First, I managed to fall in a dream without crashing or waking up. The other breakthrough was that I became aware of

light in a dream without concluding that the light in my room was waking me up. The overwhelming light and my calling on God I did not think of as a breakthrough at that time, although that turned out to be my first experience, out of 13, of what I later came to call the fullness of light. I was not ready at this point to think of the experience of light as a mystical experience.

The day after I woke up from that dream, a fellow student at the University of Pennsylvania, where I was then studying Sanskrit, loaned me a copy of Gregory Scott Sparrow's *Lucid Dreaming: Dawning of the Clear Light*. Sparrow's idea was that lucid dreams lead to experiences of light (as I had found) and that the search for this light in dreams is described in ancient Tibetan manuscripts. This was all new to me. I wrote in my journal:

> I am left with a question of which do I seek when I eliminate the dream environment—pure light or pure darkness? I would have felt that light should be eliminated. Yet there may be a case for saying that pure light may be as content-less as is pure darkness. But obviously we are dealing with two different things. The best approach seems to be to attempt the elimination of dream elements and accept what comes—darkness or light.

In June 1981, I was still working on dreamless sleep. In the meantime, I had learned that what I do not give my attention to in a dream tends to disappear. I wrote:

> I need a procedure that will take my mind off my body and its elimination. I will assume that concentration on an object may eliminate not only awareness of the body and my thoughts, but other unconscious influences. I am tempted to picture in my mind's eye a flame. As I think of a candle flame, my attention will be taken off my body, which should eliminate experience of my body.

Darkness

In August of the same year, I dreamed this:

> *I was in a tribal area resembling the Naga Hills in India. There were many young men about, some wrapped in tribal shawls. From the bottom of a hill I saw a schoolhouse at the top of the hill, from which a covered platform extended out over the hillside. The long, narrow platform was marvelous, standing about 250 feet above the ground at its far end. The platform was made of bamboo and thatch. I walked up the hill among the students.*
>
> *At the top of the hill, I came to the entrance of the platform. The entrance was covered by drapes, which someone pulled back so that I and the man who was showing me around could enter. I was surprised to see more students sitting out on the platform studying. Then classes*

were to start, so the students left for the school building. The scene seemed unlikely and I realized I was dreaming. At first, the attraction to the dream was so strong that I did not want to experiment. We walked toward the outer end of the platform. Eventually, I remembered my intention to eliminate as much of the dream as I could. So I closed my eyes and created darkness. Then I began to imagine a flame to concentrate on as I looked at the darkness. Soon, there appeared a pale white spot ahead of me, which served as a flame for me. My thought stayed with it very well. There were no distracting thoughts or circumstances. I lost awareness of my body and in the end experienced only darkness and then nothing. It seemed to me that I did not wake up immediately. When I did, I had no memory of what followed the disappearance of the darkness.

So, concentration on the flame did eliminate awareness of the body. Naturally, I did not analyze what I was doing during the concentration. I remembered afterward that I was not aware of my body. This was the dream in which I was most successful in eliminating dreaming, although afterward I did not feel that my experimenting with dreamless sleep was over.

The Fullness of Light

In lucid dreaming, I have had a wide variety of experiences of light that I do not find in ordinary dreaming, One category of light phenomena I call "stable intense lights," of which the light of the fullness is the greatest and most important for this narrative. A stable intense light stays, as it seems, before my eyes during a dream, and I can scan it (look at it and then away from it) in spite of any spinning or dreamed body movement. It does not shine on anything and does not take part in the dream. It is not integrated with any dream imagery (if any is left). Sometimes it appears just outside the normal perceptual visual field, and sometimes it remains visible for a while after I wake up. How I came to discover that my stable intense lights, including the light of the fullness, are, in a number of ways, not actually dream imagery at all involves stories that go too far beyond this account. I have written about them elsewhere.[2]

In the experiences of the fullness of light, there has been great variety. The following is my fourth experience of the fullness of light, which came in a dream in July 1982:

I was back in India looking for something. I came to the door of a room. This was the place I was looking for. As I went in, I faced a wall as of a large cube, which I had to walk around to

get to the inner room. The passageway around was fairly dark. The situation seemed odd and I realized I was dreaming.

I found in the inner room a group of poor Christian laborers from the tea plantations. They were people that I was familiar with from years of work in Assam, in the northeast corner of India, where many Christians in the Brahmaputra Valley pick tea for a living. We were glad to see each other. I still realized I was dreaming and felt that I should do something. I suggested that we sing "Amazing Grace." We all then slowly and heartily sang the hymn in English, while I directed the singing with my hand. I knew it didn't matter how well I directed, since this was a dream.

We began to sing, "Amazing grace / how sweet the sound / that saved a wretch like me." I had no trouble remembering the words of the first verse, which is all we sang. I watched to see how well the movement of the mouths of the people was coordinated with the sounds of the words (this being a dream). Their mouths moved somewhat with the music, but not precisely. We sang on loudly and grandly, "I once was lost, / but now am found, / was blind, but now I see." The experience was intensely devotional.

When the verse was over, I considered our saying the Lord's Prayer, but thought it might take too long, and I would probably wake up before we finished. As I thought about what to do, I saw that a light was shining high in front of me like a brilliant sun. I recognized this kind of light from previous dreams. Then, while the sun remained in view, intense light spread throughout the entire visual field erasing all other imagery. I was aware of the presence of God and began shouting, "God is love." My devotion was spontaneous, joyful, and profound. Barely had I called out, "God is love" a couple of times, [when] I decided to think the phrase calmly to myself instead. While I then silently repeated to myself, "God is love," over and over, I felt myself rise up gradually. The light surrounding me remained intense, and I worshiped in this way for some time before I woke up.

After I woke up and reflected on the experience, I thought of the fullness of light, as I usually did then, as just the concluding part of the dream. Over time, the experiences of the fullness of light became much more important to me than my attempts to create dreamless sleep.

Usually, the elimination of dream elements did not play an obvious part in bringing about the fullness of light. I could not see how my attempts to create dreamless sleep would be responsible for my religious experiences of light. However, there was one experience of the fullness of light in which elimination clearly played a part. This fifth experience of the fullness was recorded September 2, 1982:

We were moving back to the college in Jorhat, where we were to teach again. As I carried furniture into our house, I reflected on my recent dreams of being back in India. But now I really was back. Or was I? No, of course not. I was dreaming. I remembered that I wanted to eliminate dream imagery. Actually, I had planned more recently, and did not remember, that I wanted to just ignore the visual imagery instead of eliminating it, then think of God, and repeat, "God is love."

Then I was kneeling and leaning against a bed. A woman sat on the far side of the bed, and a man sat on the bed next to me. Intending to eliminate visual imagery, I leaned on the bed and

closed my eyes to pray. Although I created darkness intentionally by closing my eyes, my praying was spontaneous and real. I began to repeat either "God is love" or perhaps "Praise the Lord."

I was still aware of touching both the bed and the man next to me. As I prayed, I imagined pushing them away to eliminate them. They detached and I was left floating in darkness. I continued to praise God. Once I thought of repeating "Hallelujah," but remembered that that had not been my plan. I was not entirely in control of what I was doing. As often happened, I was at the mercy of what I remembered. I began to repeat silently, "Blessed is the name of the Lord."

Then a brilliant white light appeared at the upper edge of the visual field, just slightly to the right, where it stayed for a moment. Soon a bright sun appeared high in front of me, where it remained for the rest of the experience. Intense, sun-like, vibrant light filled my visual field. I was floating in light and aware of God. I continued repeating joyfully, "Blessed is the name of the Lord."

By now, I had little or no awareness of the lower part of my body. I thought of my eyes as still shut in prayer. Any contradiction between thinking of my eyes as shut and seeing light didn't occur to me. I considered opening my (dreamed) eyes to see whether light was also around my feet, but I was reluctant to interfere with the experience. Despite a few thoughts on what to do next, I remained intensely worshipful. I felt only slight movement, which was all that was left of body imagery. I repeated silently, "Blessed is the name of the Lord," until I remembered the text I had more recently planned (while awake) to say, "God is love," which I then repeated silently until I woke up.

Although I sought dreamless sleep rather than light, I felt that I had increased the light's frequency by my devotional attitude. I became convinced that the fullness was the light of the mystics, and I enjoyed these times of devotion. Even so, I was not assured while awake that I had been any closer to God during the experience. I still considered the fullness of light to be part of a dream. I decided at this point to specifically look for the light from now on instead of trying for dreamless sleep. In any case, whatever the explanation of the light, when I worshiped God within any dream, which I frequently did at that time, it was truly for me a worship experience—much more intense and single-minded than when I am awake.

Eventually, two years and five months after the first fullness of light and after 10 experiences of the fullness, I did accept the fullness to be what it seemed to be—an experience of the presence of God, as described by those whom we call "mystics."

The Tibetan Connection

For years I was interested in understanding dreamless sleep in the context of

Hinduism, which tends to see dreamless sleep as pure, objectless consciousness. I was slow to realize that the discussions of lucid dreaming and dreamless sleep in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition known as the Six Yogas of Naropa were more relevant to my experience than was the Hindu discussion.

The Tibetan texts discuss Buddhist meditation that is practiced upon falling asleep or during lucid dreaming. The aim of the meditation is to achieve dreamless sleep and, within dreamless sleep, to come to the experience of the Void, which they consider to be the emptiness that underlies all things. Dream meditation focuses on forms of certain Buddhist deities and on the sacred syllable "HUM." A successful meditation leads eventually to the experience of the clear light of the Void while one is asleep.

The texts describe eight signs, which are literally seen, that indicate one's progress in meditation during sleep. These signs of dreamless sleep are described in terms of light and darkness.[3] The first four visions are minor signs: a mirage-like appearance, a smoke-like appearance, sparkling lights like fireflies at night, and then the image of a steady lamplight. The four visions that follow are signs of the Void. First there is seen a clear, bright moonlit sky. Next, there is glowing sunlight. The next sign is a vision like a very dark empty sky, which is followed by deep unconsciousness. This is the deepest of dreamless sleep. The last sign is the clear light of the Void, which has been described by Tsongkhapa, a prominent commentator on the Six Yogas, as "of a color like the blending of the lights of sun and moon in a sky free from all darkness, like the clear sky at early dawn." This clear light, if retained, leads to liberation.

Although the visions are described in terms of sparks, fireflies, skies, and such, they are not held to be dreams of sparks, fireflies, and skies. Instead, this is what the imagery looks like when sleep becomes dreamless. Thus I came to see that the signs of dreamless sleep as described in the Tibetan texts are not dream imagery, just as my stable intense lights, including the fullness of light, are not dream imagery.

Certainly there are serious limits in drawing parallels between Tibetan Buddhist practices and either Christian mysticism or secular Western writing on lucid dreaming. Nevertheless, my gradual elimination of dream imagery, my concentration of attention on the darkness, and my religious mindset (both conscious and, I believe, unconscious) in lucid dreams that led to light,

though very different in context and practice from what is described in the Six Yogas of Naropa, seem to parallel the Tibetan practices at least in some minimal way.[4]

I find in my own experiences of darkness and light a general confirmation of the Tibetan discussions of the visual phenomena associated with lucid dreaming and dreamless sleep. The Tibetan discussions of the signs of dreamless sleep also assure me that my own stable intense lights, which are not a part of dream imagery, are not just unique personal experiences.

It is also clear that the Void, which the Tibetans prefer and find accessible beyond dreams, and the numinous experience of the presence of God that I have found beyond my dreams are totally different experiences. The disappearance of oneself into the "clear light of the Void," in the Buddhist manner is not described as an experience of God. Conversely, knowing the presence of God in the light and being overcome with intense reverence and joy, which for me is accompanied by the "dreamless" imagery of the fullness of light, cannot be mistaken for any kind of Void. Nor do an experience of the light of the Void and an awareness of the presence of God in the light appear to me to lie on some kind of necessary phenomenological or ontological continuum. Each modality of dreamlessness can be recognized, appreciated, and studied in its own terms.

Notes

1. An earlier version of this chapter was presented at the preconference workshop on lucid dreaming at the Science and Nonduality Conference in San Rafael, CA, on October 19, 2011. The writer may be reached at geochar58@aol.com.
2. See George Gillespie, "Lights and Lattices and Where They Are Seen," *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 68 (1989): 487–504; and "Stable Intense Lights: A Distinct Class of Light Imagery Seen in Lucid Dreaming," *DreamTime* 26 (2009): 14–15.
3. G. K. Gyatso, *Clear Light of Bliss: Mahamudra in Vajrayana Buddhism* (London: Wisdom, 1982); Tsongkhapa, *Tsongkhapa's Six Yogas of Naropa*, ed. and trans. G. H. Mullin (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1996); Tsongkhapa, "A Practice Manual on the Six Yogas of Naropa: Taking the Practice in Hand," in *Readings on the Six Yogas of Naropa*, ed. and trans. G. H. Mullin (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1997), 99–135.
4. Harry Hunt, "Lucid Dreaming as a Meditative State: Some Evidence from Long-Term Meditators in Relation to the Cognitive-Psychological Bases of Transpersonal Phenomena," in *Dream Images: A Call to Mental Arms,* ed. J. Gackenbach and A. Sheikh (Amityville, NY: Baywood, 1991), 265–285.

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15

The Mystical Potential of Lucid Dreaming

Kenneth Kelzer

Today there is a worldwide growing interest in the reporting of mystical experiences. This is due to some extent to the psychedelic revolution launched in the 1960s, when many people reported having mystical experiences while under the influence of LSD, psilocybin, mescaline, and other psychedelic substances. In the wake of that era, as I was first beginning to speak and write about my "experiment" with lucid dreaming, a colleague and close friend of mine said something I have never forgotten: it is difficult to talk about mystical experiences or even lucid dreams to people who have not had either. My colleague believed that some people could easily become angry upon hearing what I have to say, insofar as they make no claims to having mystical experiences themselves and could easily feel alienated. Even so, he encouraged me to communicate them anyway.

I published my first book, *The Sun and the Shadow: My Experiment with Lucid Dreaming*, in 1987.[1] In that book, which at the time was only the fifth full-length book written on the topic of lucid dreaming, I discuss two lucid dreams that were powerful enough to call mystical experiences. Such a claim was not unique insofar as two previous authors, Patricia Garfield and Scott Sparrow, had made similar claims.[2] In my account I found myself repeating and validating many of their claims.

I wrote about my mystical experiences in as much detail as I could to attempt to convey to modern readers, as precisely as possible, something about how they had occurred. I was 40 years old at the time and over the years had read a fair amount about mysticism. But in all of the accounts that I had read, I had one concern above all—namely, the generic vagueness with which most authors spoke about their mystical experiences. This often led me to doubt that their claims were valid. Whether these claims were found in the Old Testament or the New Testament or in Sufi poetry did not matter. Vagueness was vagueness, and it always left me feeling doubtful about the

authenticity of such claims.

As a young adult, I once heard the well-known televangelist and faith healer, Oral Roberts, speak of a time when he went out into the desert for meditation and prayer, claiming that God spoke to him there. At the time I wondered whether God spoke to him through a burning bush or an especially tall cactus or a glowing cloud or some other phenomenon of nature. In his account, Roberts, like so many other claimants, demonstrated the same generic vagueness and lack of details. But then most of these mystics or supposed mystics were speaking from a perspective in which faith was paramount and science of no account. They were not expressly trying to meet the challenge of our times, to create some kind of rapprochement between religion and science, faith and reason, or mysticism and the everyday world. We must accept our forebears on their own terms. They did not live in our modern, scientific age and it probably never occurred to them that the "how" of their mystical experiences would be important for modern readers. For me as a contemporary American, *how* a mystical experience occurs is just as important as *what* occurs. Therefore, when I wrote *The Sun and the Shadow*, I sought to convey as much of these details as I possibly could.

Another difficulty surrounding the word *mystical* arises from numerous popular misconceptions about the term. The word may bring to mind various related words, such as *mystique* and *mystification*. I am dedicating this chapter to address these popular misconceptions because, if there is one thing I hate, it is obscurantism. It is my intent to make everything clear and accessible rather than to allure or mystify anyone. The more we make it safe to talk about lucidity in all forums, the more we as a society will deepen our understanding of this particular type of dreaming and of the human mind.

Webster's Dictionary provides us with some help by defining the term "mystical" in two different, complementary ways: (1) "having a spiritual meaning or reality that is neither apparent to the senses nor obvious to the intelligence, for example, the mystical food of the sacrament"; and (2) "involving or having the nature of an individual's direct subjective communion with God or ultimate reality, for example, the mystical experience of the Inner Light."[3]

For those who have never had a mystical experience or who make no such claim, the essence of the definition of "mystical" is clear if we keep in mind that we are speaking about a highly subjective internal state that is

difficult to describe in words. Such experiences can be very difficult to express even in artistic forms such as poetry, music, painting, or ecstatic dancing, which for centuries have been very common forms of mystical expression. Any author who shares with his readers how his intimate psycho-spiritual experiences occurred leaves himself open to criticism and potential vulnerability. Of course, he also leaves himself open to the fullest appreciation because of that openness.

Usually the recipient of grace feels both the need and the struggle to express the essence of his or her mystical experience. It is essential that this struggle takes place both on the part of those who claim to have had a mystical experience and those who have not. There can easily be a tremendous communication gap between these two parties, a vast ocean of separation in which two people are standing on opposite shores. It is essential to authentic culture that both parties reach across this ocean and try to connect. In *The Sun and the Shadow*, I attempted to accommodate this spirit.

Another communication gap occurs between people when attempting to explain the origin of claims regarding mystical experiences. We could easily be divided into two camps: the naturalists and the supernaturalists. The naturalists start with the basic assumption that the human brain is an incredibly complex and powerful organ and is capable of producing ecstatic or mystical experiences from within itself. They claim that purely natural forces, physiological and neurological, cause the phenomenon of mystical experience. I welcome that theory, although I do not find it a sufficient explanation. The supernaturalists, in contrast, regard mystical experience as some sort of divine intervention and perceive that the mystic is truly a "recipient of grace," a term that Scott Sparrow uses in his book *Lucid Dreaming, Dawning of the Clear Light.* Atheists and agnostics, of course, would find that claim problematic. I think all would be well served if we keep our minds open to all the possibilities.

Fortunately, we do not have to resolve this debate in order to benefit from lucid dreaming or consider the mystical potential of lucid dreaming. It is the nature of mystical expression that it transcends the boundaries of space, time, and culture. Poetry can bridge the vast ocean of separation and connect us across the continents and the centuries. The Sufi poet Jelaluddin Rumi (1207–1273) has made a great contribution to modern times as his mystical, ecstatic poetry has become widely known and loved. Here is one of his ecstatic poems, translated by the contemporary American poet Robert Bly. It

inspires me every time I read it.

“The Jar with the Dry Rim” by Robert Bly
The mind is an ocean . . . and so many worlds
are rolling there, mysterious, dimly seen!
And our bodies? Our body is a cup,
floating on the ocean; soon it will fill and sink . . .
Not even one bubble will show where it went down.
The Spirit is so near that you can’t see it!
But reach for it . . . don’t be a jar
full of water, whose rim is always dry.
Don’t be the rider who gallops all night
and never sees the horse that is beneath him.[4]

My Experiment

I will now give a short summary of how I began and conducted my experiment with lucid dreaming. With a perspective of 30 years of reflection, I will then narrate in full the two mind-altering and life-altering lucid dreams that constitute mystical experiences for me, providing updated commentary on their effects on my life.

In the early fall of 1980, I felt a consistent longing come over me combined with a generic meditative mood urging me to attempt to induce lucid dreaming. I had at that time in my life already studied dreams for many years, kept a regular dream journal, taught numerous classes and seminars for adults at local colleges, and worked with dreams extensively in my practice as a psychotherapist. I had read about lucid dreams, was theoretically open to them, and had experienced several that occurred spontaneously. I was so impressed with the beauty and inspiration of these spontaneously occurring lucid dreams that I thought it would be wonderful to receive more of them. So I began my experiment.

The technique I used for induction was very simple. It was a technique described by Carlos Castaneda in his book *Journey to Ixtlan*.[5] During my waking hours, every day I frequently held up both of my hands in my field of vision, gazed steadily and calmly at them, and repeated a simple affirmation over and over: “I see my hands in my dream . . . I know I am dreaming.”

Within two weeks after starting this experiment, I received a lucid dream and was launched into a most stimulating and transformative series of dreams, both lucid and nonlucid.[6] I will present later in this chapter the full text of my two most powerful lucid dreams in that series.

When these two mystical lucid dreams first occurred, they provided me with an inexhaustible wellspring of inner realizations. Now with the perspective of more time, I have found them to be even richer and more powerful in their personal meaning and certainly worthy of further contemplation. In his autobiography *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Carl Gustav Jung spoke eloquently about this process in which he periodically reexamined the major dreams of his own lifetime.[7] Now in my early 70s, when I think back on my life and the powerful, formative experiences I have had, including professional training I have received, the charismatic personalities I have known, the inspiring teachers under whom I have studied, and the life-changing books and films that I have digested, none of these can compare with the transformative inner power of these two lucid dreams. They have done more to make me the person I am than any other single source or influence.

My experiment exploded into a powerful climax early on the morning of January 2, 1981. About 6 a.m., I awakened from sleep, flooded with intense mental and physical energy, and realized that I had just received three lucid dreams in a row.

I had spent much of the preceding day, which was New Year's Day, rereading sections of Garfield's *Creative Dreaming*, immersing myself in her chapter on lucid dreaming. I was also busy outlining the content for a course on lucid dreaming that I was planning to offer soon. By the end of that day, I was very excited and energized by all the stimulation that was racing through me. My excitement was intensified by several conversations I had during the day with my wife, Charlene, regarding my proposed course. Arriving early in the morning, these companionate lucid dreams occurred one after the other with some normal sleeping time between each one.

Prime Time for Lucid Dreams

January 2, 1981:

I am dreaming and I become aware that I am dreaming. As a confirmation to myself, I mentally call my hands into my field of vision and they appear instantly. My hands have an ethereal, luminous quality to them and I am convinced that I am lucid, as I feel that refined, lucid energy moving through my hands, face and head once again.

I see my surroundings. I am in a small jail cell, lying on my back, sleeping on a simple cot. Retaining my face-up position, I consciously and deliberately levitate my body up into the air and then roll over a couple of times.

Now I hear our five-year-old son, Erik, walking into the bedroom in his usual manner. I hear the shuffle of his feet on the carpet and feel the waterbed shake as he plops onto the far side of the bed next to Charlene. I hear them speaking and soon Charlene tells him to go back to his own bed, which he does reluctantly. I continue to focus on my lucidity in the dream state. I keep full concentration on my body floating in the air and feel quite pleased with myself. I am fully convinced that this conversation between Charlene and Erik is occurring on the physical plane, completely outside the dream. I am able to overhear it all and still maintain the continuity of this lucid dream. I determine to stay balanced, and I do so.

I realize clearly that I wish there was some way that I could set limits against Erik coming into the bedroom in the early morning because I remember what I read yesterday in Creative Dreaming*, that the hours of the early morning are prime time for lucid dreams. I feel good in getting clear about this particular desire. After a few moments the lucidity begins to fade and then the dreamscape also fades as I fall back into a sound sleep.*

Lucid Balancing

January 2, 1981:

I am dreaming and I become aware that I am dreaming. I am again in the same small jail cell, which I recognize from the previous lucid dream. I am lying again face-up on the same, simple cot in the cell, and after a while with a distinct act of the will I deliberately levitate my body up into the air and float there above the cot. Again I hear Erik's footsteps as he shuffles into our bedroom and crawls into bed on Charlene's side. Again I overhear their conversation in which Charlene tells him to return to his own bed. He resists and whines at first and then eventually complies with her request. As he walks out of the bedroom, I feel convinced that this time also I am overhearing their conversation occurring on the physical plane, outside of the dream while I remain aware of the dream scenario and my lucid consciousness. Again I enjoy maintaining my balance, as I realize that I am not being pulled out of the lucid dream state into the waking state. Soon my lucidity fades and the dream also fades. I fall asleep again.

The Gift of the Magi

January 2, 1981:

I am dreaming and I become aware that I am dreaming. I feel the strong, tingling sensation

come over me as the lucid energy rises up into my head again. I see that I am in the same small jail cell, which I clearly remember from both of the previous dreams. I decide to fly and I easily and effortlessly sail through the air out of the cell. I burst into a whole new scene and soon I am floating gracefully over a beautiful, bustling college campus. It is a brisk, early morning and I see many students with books under their arms heading for their classes.

I see an old friend, Jacques Jimenez, and I decide to tell him about my experiments with lucid dreaming. I know he will be amazed. I invite him to fly with me, assuring him that I have the power to levitate his body at will. He is incredulous, yet willing to take a risk at the same time. I raise him up and together we fly, belly down, across the campus. Jacques is very impressed but tells me he has an important class to catch and says he has to go. I say goodbye and I fly off away from the campus.

Again I hear Erik coming into our bedroom and repeating with Charlene almost the exact same dialogue as occurred before, as I was dreaming the two previous dreams. He shuffles in and crawls into bed next to her. Soon she asks him to return to his own bed. Again I am convinced that I am hearing this conversation on the physical plane, while still maintaining my delicate balance of remaining lucid in the dream state.

The scene changes. Still lucid, I am now one of the three Magi, traveling alone by camel across northern Africa in search of the Christ Child. I feel a tremendous pull in my chest to complete this journey, though at times I do not know for sure which direction to take. I know I must go eastward, and occasionally I see the star, glimmering faintly on the eastern horizon, calling me onward. The journey is long and arduous and yet I gladly continue, day after day, night after night, and week after week for a very long time. At times the passage of these countless days and nights seems like one long moment of measureless time. At other times each distinct moment of the entire journey is very clearly etched in my awareness.

Clothed in long, flowing robes, sitting alone on top of my camel, I feel fully immersed in its deep, steady, rhythmic motions as I sway widely from side to side with every step that it takes. Upon its back I feel in total harmony with this gentle and faithful beast, at one with the complete cycle of its movements, leaning out on each sideward swing and riding each corresponding return swing back to the camel's center with full, conscious deliberation. As I travel now, I enter a state of deep meditation and see so clearly that my ability to see the star at all is based on my inner attunement. Without this fine, delicate, inner tuning of consciousness I would not even see the star or care that the Christ had been born, much less find him.

At one point as I travel by night, I overhear two highwaymen lying under a tree near the roadside. One is boasting loudly and crudely about his plans to rob some traveler soon. I focus my energy inward at once, feeling a most unusual kind of strength as I ride my camel and feeling fully confident in this method of protecting myself from their kind. I also feel fire coming out of my eyes and know that if I chose, I could, with a powerful glare, send two burning beams of light in their direction and fry them both to a crisp. With a sense of measureless power and poise, and keenly aware of my journey's ultimate purpose, I pass on.

Through this whole drama I am continuously aware that I am dreaming. My inner self is flooded with a rarified and highly refined "light-energy" that circulates gently and continuously inside my whole body. I feel extremely uplifted.

Now I am approaching the gates of Jerusalem and the star grows brighter and larger on the horizon. At times the star disappears behind the taller buildings of the city. I am pleased with the size, modernity, and prosperity of Jerusalem. I enjoy entering the city.

I enter the palace of Herod the king and am given a most gracious, hospitable, and royal welcome. Everyone is most interested in my story as I tell of following the star, my long journey, and as I ask them for help in finding the new king. Herod seems so warm and friendly I assume that he would be as eager as I to find the new babe. Herod is a handsome young man, about 25

years old, with dark hair and bright, flashing eyes. He wears a gorgeous, full-length robe, deep burgundy in color, and the entire chamber floor before his throne is covered with a plush, pale blue carpet, absolutely dazzling in its beauty.

However, I sense that Herod does not believe my story. I tell him that I am an expert astrologer and am well versed in esoteric matters. He scoffs and at once I realize that he is not conscious enough to understand and appreciate what I am saying. I quickly look about me and feel out the inner vibrations of the astrologers of his court. With full clarity about their inner life, I can see they are all mediocre. I plead with Herod, "But surely you must believe in ESP?" Again, he scoffs. Instantly, I decide to continue my journey without his help.

As soon as I leave Herod's court I see the star again, looming large and bright on the northeastern horizon. With great joy and anticipation I quickly arrive at a small, modest home where I behold a marvelous scene. I see the small Christ Child, probably a year old, lying in his crib with Mary and Joseph sitting beside him. Several shepherds and two other magi who have arrived before me are kneeling before the child in humble worship. A beautiful, bright light radiates from the child continuously. I hurriedly dismount from my camel and take my place, kneeling beside the others.

Suddenly I feel a tremendous rush of emotion within me, welling up from my stomach and chest so strongly that I burst into uncontrollable sobbing. I sob and sob and sob, heaving my chest for a long time as all of the feelings of the journey pour through me: extreme joy, relief, sadness over Herod, courage, determination, and many other feelings. With my eyes brimming with tears, I look at Mary and Joseph and then back to Mary. In a flash, many deep and tender feelings are communicated back and forth between us, all telepathically, each message clearly sent and clearly received with the fullest speed of thought. Not a word is spoken and none needs to be spoken. I feel so relieved; she understands me totally.

I reach into my bag to offer my gift to the child. With tentativeness, and sobbing continuously, with a flood of tears streaming down my cheeks, I ask, "Will you accept pure gold?" The child with a delicate little smile simply radiates in silence. Several times more I ask, "Will you accept pure gold? . . . Pure gold? . . . Pure gold? . . . Will you accept pure gold?" Still sobbing profoundly with my whole body, my thoughts now begin to race. I realize that pure gold is the best that the world can offer, yet the babe and the Light are priceless beyond compare. I am completely overwhelmed.

For a long time I kneel quietly beside the other magi, gazing earnestly at the infant. I am totally entranced by the dazzling, beautiful light that emanates continuously from his whole body and especially from his loving eyes that simply look back at me, so steady. I feel as if I could kneel here forever.

Now I feel Charlene moving on the waterbed and putting her arms around my physical body. She is extending a sexual invitation to me and I am completely clear that she is touching my physical body and is hoping to arouse me from sleep. Still lucid, I gaze with total absorption at the infant Jesus, appreciating so much the beautiful, glowing light that radiates from him continuously. I feel so solidly established in the lucid state and so transfixed by this vision that I know that Charlene's touching my physical body cannot pull me out of lucidity or out of the dream. I feel fully concentrated and centered in the light.

As Charlene continues with her sexual advances, there is no doubt or hesitation in my mind as to which I would choose in this moment. I realize I would never abandon this experience of immersion in the Light for sexual pleasure or any other pleasure that I have ever known. I realize that it is rare for me to decline a sexual offer, yet I do so without hesitation. I prefer with one single-minded focus to concentrate all my attention on the glowing Christ Child. I realize that compared to this Light, all the other pleasures of life that I have ever known are absolutely pale. I feel completely content and yet enraptured, totally at peace and enlivened at the same

time.

After a time, the light that surrounds the child slowly begins to fade. Still lucid, and still aware of Charlene persistently caressing my physical body, I now plan my exit from the dream, for I sense that this marvelous scene is coming to its own natural conclusion. For a few moments longer I watch as the light slowly fades from the Christ Child until the dream has almost vanished completely. And then, with a conscious act of the will and with a deep feeling of reluctance, I choose to leave the lucid dream. Instantly I awaken, and as I return to the physical world I feel a tremendous amount of energy and emotion rushing all through me, body and mind. I feel totally ecstatic, in a way that I have never felt before.

Upon awakening from this lucid dream I simply lie still for a few moments feeling its tremendous afterglow, stunned and amazed. In a flash, I intuitively entitled the third dream "The Gift of the Magi," borrowing the title from one of O. Henry's best-known short stories. I then told Charlene that I just had the most incredible lucid dream and proceeded to tell her the third dream in its entirety. As soon as I completed the telling, she also felt overwhelmed by it and said with full conviction in her voice: "The title of this dream is 'The Gift of the Magi.' " This piece of telepathic communication between us added even more intensity to my experience as she gave the dream the exact same title I had silently given it only a few minutes earlier.

This is the most astounding lucid dream that I have ever heard or read. It is certainly the longest I have seen in print. And while intuitive readers can appreciate it substantially, it remains for me something so much more. This is as it should be.[8]

As I stated earlier, it is a tremendous communication challenge to convey to others the essence of a mystical experience. All such attempts are bound to be limited, perhaps even severely limited. But I do believe that those who have received these kinds of experiences are offering a gift to the world if they attempt such communication anyway. I also believe now that "recipients of grace" are well advised to make this attempt for the sake of their own mental and psycho-spiritual health. In the intervening years, I have often reflected upon a powerful quotation from the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas:

> If you release what is within you, what you release will save you. If you do not release what is within you, what you do not release will destroy you.[9]

In numerous classes, seminars, and workshops that I have taught over the years, I have often spoken of the acronym LSD as having taken on a new

meaning for me. Those letters now stand for "lucid spiritual dreaming." Any temptations that I had in the past to use psychedelic drugs have long since vanished as I have many times meditated upon the power, the imagery, and the refined creative energy of "The Gift of the Magi."

When I was a graduate student at the University of California at Berkeley in the late 1960s, I frequently asked people who had used psychedelics to describe their mind-altering experiences. Most of them would not even attempt this and would usually fall back upon the stock answer: "Oh man, it cannot be described in words. If you want to know what it's like, you have to take acid yourself." Being somewhat cautious by nature, I always felt put off both by their starry-eyed look and by how quickly they latched onto this standard reply. But then I read two milestone books that truly communicated about peak experiences: *The Joyous Cosmology* by Alan Watts and *The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell* by Aldous Huxley.[10] I am so grateful to both of these authors because they are prime examples of highly intelligent, articulate people who achieved a high level of success in describing their psychedelic experiences with vivid, highly personal accounts. Both clearly demonstrated that although it is impossible to *communicate* a mystical experience, it is still possible to *communicate about* the experience.

In addition, I am grateful to all the great mystics of all the traditions that I have encountered. Through their ecstatic poetry, inspirational music, and art they attempted to convey the essence of their inner experiences and visions. Foremost for me are Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179), Rumi (1207–1273), and the North Indian poet Kabir (1440–1518).

I have always been moved by the poet Robert Bly reading his translation of this mystical poem by Kabir:

> The small ruby everyone wants has fallen out on the road.
> Some think it is east of us, others west of us.
> Some say, "among primitive earth rocks," others, "in the deep waters."
> Kabir's instinct told him it was inside, and what it was worth,
> and he wrapped it up carefully in his heart-cloth.[11]

Returning to my own narrative, the second mystical experience that came to me in my experiment with lucid dreaming occurred approximately 10 months after "The Gift of the Magi." The principal scenes and imagery in this

dream were decidedly Buddhist and Hindu in their content. This was in direct contrast to the explicitly Christian content of "The Gift of the Magi," which provided me with still another reminder that mystical experiences as such know no cultural bounds and transcend common societal norms. As the medieval mystic Thomas Aquinas (1226–1274) once said, a mystical experience is *totaliter aliter*—that is, something that is totally other. While this second dream was totally different from the first in its symbolism, it was very similar in its basic message.

The Arrival of the Serpent Power

November 6, 1981:

I am standing somewhere inside a small dark room and I see two square window frames in front of me. The frames are simple, open spaces in the wall and I see a bright light streaming in from the outside. I see someone's hand coming in through one of the windows, reaching toward me as it holds out some small object of art, perhaps a jewel or crystal. I see only his hand and wrist and the beautiful small object as the room itself is in total darkness. Suddenly I realize I am dreaming and I feel a powerful jolt of energy shoot through my body. I rise up off the floor and enter the light, flying head-first through one of the open window frames.

Instantly, I enter a whole new scene. Still lucid, I am now outside in a remote area in the woods standing beside a small log cabin. A beautiful blanket of freshly fallen snow covers the entire scene, with many trees in a lovely valley that extends before me. I am with an unknown woman companion and we are held captive by a small band of Indians. As I look out across the valley below me and up the crest on the opposite side, I see two strong-willed, determined cowboys mounted on horses. Swiftly they ride through the deep snowdrifts and in a matter of seconds they cover the distance between us and rescue us from the Indians. There is no shooting or violence; they simply arrive, emitting so much power out of their bodies that I know we are liberated.

The scene changes abruptly. Now I am lying face down on the ground somewhere on a patch of bare, brown earth. Still fully aware that I am dreaming, I see a huge serpent approach me from the right. Quickly it glides over my back, then turns and passes back beneath me, silently sliding between my body and the ground. Then it rises, turns, and comes up over my back again, strongly gripping me around my chest in its powerful coil. Its gray-brown body is about 3 to 4 inches thick and about 30 feet long. Its eyes are a strange yellow-green in color; they gaze at me calmly and steadily, continuously emitting their soft, yellow-green luminescence from within. Finding its position now, the serpent pauses, its head poised in the air about 3 feet above me, and it watches me through its glowing eyes with a calm and amazingly neutral objectivity. Arching my neck backward and straining to lift my head, I look upward. Our eyes meet and the impact is extremely powerful—absolutely unforgettable as I gaze for a long moment into the serpent's profound yellow-green eyes. I am utterly perplexed and fascinated at the same time.

Now I drop my head and begin to wrestle with the serpent. Trying to free myself from its

grip, I discover that I am no match for its incredible strength. I feel afraid that it will crush me. I wrestle with all my might for some time until, exhausted, I decide to stop struggling. Soon I perceive that the serpent is actually very gentle, merely intent on holding me in its relentless grip. I am very surprised to feel that its body is warm-blooded, not cold-blooded as I would expect.

Suddenly it makes a quick, jerking movement with its coil, which rotates my prone body onto its side. After a few moments it quickly jerks me back again to a face-down position. The serpent seems to be playing with me in some strange, uncanny fashion, rotating me back and forth in its gradual, deliberate manner. Several times it rotates me from my face-down position up onto one side, then back again to face down, and then up onto my other side. I feel totally subject to its will as these movements are repeated several times, each time with a quick, powerful jerk of its massive coil.

Suddenly the whole scene vanishes. I feel many confusing, swirling energies moving through my body and I feel a lot of dizziness in my head. After a while my field of vision gradually becomes clear again and I see myself lying on the same spot of bare, brown earth, face down with my body fully outstretched once again. I am still lucid, fully aware that I am dreaming.

Now another large, gray-brown serpent approaches me from my right in the exact same manner as the first. This serpent is fully identical to the first in every detail of its appearance, except it is slightly smaller in size and length. Quickly and smoothly it glides over my body and passes beneath me, going between my body and the ground and coming up over the top again, making one full coil around me exactly as its predecessor had done. Though it is slightly smaller in size, I can feel that this serpent, too, is extremely powerful. It also positions its head about 3 feet above me and gazes down upon me with full steadiness and inner calm and with the same abundance of amazingly neutral, universal objectivity.

Again I stare upward for a time into the amazing powerful eyes of the serpent, trying to fathom its intent. I am entranced with the soft, yellow-green luminescence that steadily flows from somewhere deep, deep within the serpent's eyes and even from beyond its eyes, as if from the untold reaches of another world. I feel totally in awe as I absorb the air of mystery that emanates from the serpent continuously. I return its steady gaze for a while and then I drop my head as I began to wrestle with it, struggling with all my might to free myself from its powerful grip. I thrash and thrash about, struggling in every way that I can while the serpent remains virtually motionless, calmly gazing at me from above. Effortlessly it holds me in its single coil, exactly as the first serpent had done, until at last I finally surrender, knowing that I am no match for its incredible strength. As I lie there quietly for several long moments, I realize that like its predecessor, this serpent too is a quite gentle toward me, in the same, strange, neutral way. I am surprised to feel that it too is a warm-blooded creature.

Suddenly I awaken and I feel very dizzy and confused by multiple, swirling energies surging throughout my body, flowing directly from the dream. I feel overwhelmed by the sheer power of the dream and very excited by it as well.

Upon awakening from this lucid dream, I felt every bit as stunned as I did upon awakening from "The Gift of the Magi." Over the past 30 years I have often meditated upon "The Arrival of the Serpent Power," primarily upon the eerie, yellow-green luminescence emanating from deep within the two serpents' eyes. These eyes stimulate many a question for me about the ultimate nature of the universe, and of life, death, and life beyond death. Those eyes always draw me into thinking about the ultimate nature of

everything that matters the most. At this point in my personal evolution, they remind me of the profound respect that is due to the *mysterium tremendum*, the ultimate mysteriousness of the universe and everything in it. They serve as a reminder that no matter how much I know, or think I know, there will always be many more levels and depths to the universe that go beyond anything that we can know. If I have ever encountered any image that is an antidote to shallow rationalism or the intellectual smugness of scientism, the powerful eyes of those two serpents are, for me, that antidote.

This dream succinctly portrays one of the major themes of psycho-spiritual growth—namely, the surrender of the personal, individual ego. My interaction with each of the two serpents was the same, in that initially I struggled with all my might against their strength. But in the end my choice to stop struggling, to surrender to their ultimate power, was essential to connecting profoundly with the spirit of each serpent.

Love requires letting go of fear, and ongoing spiritual growth requires letting go of every attachment to which we are clinging. The serpents were tremendous teachers. In the Hindu tradition, the serpent is commonly seen as a symbol for wisdom and the awakening of the *kundalini* energy. I am now convinced that for some lucid dreamers, the process of lucid dreaming does indeed awaken the kundalini—a vast topic in its own right that I do not have the space to discuss in depth in this chapter.

People who know about my experiment with lucid dreaming sometimes ask me if I still have lucid dreams like the ones I had when I began my experiment. I do not, and I tell them that I do not. Several years after having had these peak experiences, I found myself moving on in life. I think now that it is essential for some individuals to move on lest they become addicted to their peak experiences and seek to spend too much of their time there.

At some point, I adopted a Buddhist perspective. I chose to remain open to lucid dreaming as a lifelong activity but decided not to cling to it. In fairly recent conversations with Patricia Garfield and Scott Sparrow, both reported similar experiences. They said that their lucid dreams have become less frequent and less intense as they also have found themselves moving on and have consciously chosen not to become attached to their peak experiences.

It is important not to look upon this “letting go” as some form of indifference or lack of commitment. Rather, for many lucid dreamers this may well be the normal flow of life. This metaphor of the river has become

one of my favorites for understanding my own lifespan and that of others. We are all like a river with its origin high in the mountains, flowing steadily downstream eventually to become one with the sea. The rocks and boulders and the trees along the riverbank change as we move along, but the river as such remains a river. It may become contaminated or blocked by a dam, but in our adult lives we do not have to remain adulterated or blocked if we make the right personal choices. So, I regard any single mystical experience as one that could deeply nourish a person for an entire lifetime even if he or she had only one such experience in that lifetime.

I am reminded of the title of one of Jack Kornfield's books, *After the Ecstasy, the Laundry.*[12] In this book, the Buddhist meditation teacher discusses the importance of returning to everyday life and being willing to function in that everyday world after the newfound awareness that frequently follows a profound experience. This particular commitment, in my opinion, is one of the best safeguards we have against falling into individual inflation of the ego. True psycho-spiritual growth requires a willingness to come down from the mountain and perform our everyday tasks well, or to perform them better than before, but perform them nevertheless.

One of my favorite stories from Roman Catholic lore is told about St. Aloysius of Gonzaga (1568–1591). Having already acquired a reputation for wisdom and saintliness even as a young man, Aloysius was playing a game of billiards one day with the brothers in his religious community. One of them posed him a serious question: "Aloysius, what would you do right now if you knew the world were coming to an end tonight?" Aloysius reportedly responded calmly, "First of all, I would finish this game of billiards."

Whether we use the laundry basket or the billiards table as our prop, the message is the same. Psycho-spiritual maturity requires a certain amount of detachment, a willingness not to cling to anything or anyone. In working with students over the years regarding lucid dreaming, I have learned that some seek lucid dreams most avidly and never have one. Some do not seek them at all and have them, or even have them in abundance. Others may seek such dreams continuously and have them occasionally. Others may seek high-level, inspirational lucid dreams, yet have only routine, relatively boring lucid dreams. All this provides a message as we look at such a variety of human responses to lucidity. Among other things, it reminds me that lucid dreams are a means to an end, but not an end in themselves.

The third Zen patriarch said it better than anyone: “Do not seek enlightenment. Only cease to cherish opinion.” When I meditate upon this simple teaching, I think about the word “opinion” in two senses, my own opinions as well as the opinions of others.

At this time in my life, I often stop and ask myself what difference my experiment with lucid dreaming made in the long run. Second, I ask what difference these two mystical dreams made in the long run. Did they make me a more sensitive person? Did they make me more internally aware? Did they bring me greater clarity of mind and thought no matter what I was thinking about? Did they at times tempt me to fall into a path of elitism? Did I wind up thinking or feeling I was somehow superior to others who did not have such experiences? Did my experiment help me feel more compassion for those who were suffering? Did my experiment sharpen my perceptions so that I could see through self-delusion and various kinds of propaganda more quickly? My answer to all of these questions is simply “yes.”

Did these two mystical lucid dreams and my overall experiment with lucid dreaming lead me to experience heightened delights of the physical senses? Did they set me up to live in a state that enabled me to appreciate more keenly fine music or the delicate rays of the sun, for example? Did they lead me to make sure I frequently take the time to stop and listen to a wild bird singing in my backyard? Did they encourage me to contemplate the compact glory of the first buds of spring on the tips of living branches? Did they sensitize me to appreciate the beauty in the veins of a fallen leaf carefully examined in the crisp air of autumn? Once again my answer to all of these questions is simply “yes.”

Above all, I ask myself, would my experiment with lucid dreaming lead me to encourage others, assuming they have normal levels of health in mind and body, to pursue this path? My answer is “most definitely, yes.” All in all, this part of my life has been a wonderful journey and although I faced powerful challenges along the way, I have no regrets.

The inner universe of lucid dreaming has enormous potential. For those who in our generation have opened up this door for the first time in the history of the world to a general audience, beyond the walls of Tibetan monasteries or other esoteric circles, I say we can be truly proud of our endeavors. It will, of course, remain for future generations to carry on our work and to see how the rivers of life of pioneering individuals will

eventually converge with the rivers of the many cultures of the world. In the end, we are all seeking the same goals—humanity's individual and collective welfare. In the end, all forms of dreamwork and the processes of lucid dreamwork hold out great potential to a world still wracked with suffering and evil and, frequently, desperate for hope. Dreamworkers are visionaries who work toward the triumph of our common humanity in the end.

All forms of dreamwork have the potential to deepen our contact with our universality. The globalized age is an ecumenical age, an age where the study of comparative religion, comparative psychology, and cross-cultural studies of all kinds will continue to grow. Personally, I am very excited about all of these developments.

However, in addition to cultivating universal consciousness, I now frequently urge people to make sure that they do not abandon their own historical, cultural, and religious roots in the process of their branching out widely. Anyone who pursues the path of universality and winds up abandoning his or her own roots is that much the weaker. So at this time in my life, in addition to studying many of the world traditions, I often read and meditate upon the Bible simply because it is the foundation of my Christian roots. It has created my own historical base. My history is my history; that cannot be changed. Going from one's roots to universality, and from universality back to one's roots, is an exciting life adventure in that traveling back and forth enriches the life of the individual.

For myself, the Bible is in itself an amazing phenomenon. Having been translated into more than 2,100 languages, it is by far the most studied collection of books in human history. It can also be a widely misunderstood and misused collection of books, which motivates me all the more to study it carefully. The image of the Garden of Eden in Genesis, the first book of the Bible, and the image of Jerusalem the Golden City in The Apocalypse (also known as the Book of Revelation), the last book of the Bible, are talking about the same reality. Both symbolize the ideal world that has been the deepest aspiration of all humankind from the beginning of time.

My experiment with lucid dreaming taught me many things. Its richest lessons emanated from these two powerful mystical dreams, one saturated with the imagery and themes of the Bible and the other with the imagery and themes of the Buddhist and Hindu traditions. It is obvious that in my experiment East has met West, and West has met East. Now "The Gift of the

Magi" and "The Arrival of the Serpent Power" are melded and welded together in my consciousness and will remain there for the rest of my days. In such a powerful forging, I find only complementarity and no contradictions. I certainly find a renewed sense of awe as I look back upon my experiment with a perspective of 30 years.

Notes

1. Kenneth Kelzer, *The Sun and the Shadow: My Experiment with Lucid Dreaming* (Virginia Beach, VA: A.R.E. Press, 1987).
2. Patricia Garfield, *Pathway to Ecstasy: The Way of the Dream Mandala* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979); Gregory Scott Sparrow, *Lucid Dreaming: Dawning of the Clear Light* (Virginia Beach, VA: A.R.E. Press, 1976).
3. *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1989).
4. Republished with permission. This poem is a revised translation originally published in Robert Bly and Coleman Barks, *Poems of Rumi (*South San Francisco: Audio Literature, 1989).
5. Carlos Castaneda, *Journey to Ixtlan: The Lessons of Don Juan* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), Chapters 9–13.
6. A full account of these 33 dreams and how I worked with them is available in *The Sun and the Shadow.*
7. Carl G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, ed. Aniela Jaffe (New York: Random House, 1961).
8. The content of this "so much more"—physical, psychological, and spiritual—is described at length in *The Sun and the Shadow,* page 42 and following.
9. Gnostic Gospel of Thomas, Saying 70.
10. Alan Watts, *The Joyous Cosmology: Adventures in the Chemistry of Consciousness* (New York: Vintage Books, 1962); Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963).
11. Republished with permission. This poem is a revised translation originally published in Robert Bly, *Poems of Kabir* (South San Francisco: Audio Literature, 1988).
12. Jack Kornfield, *After the Ecstasy, the Laundry* (New York: Bantam Books, 2000).

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